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THE FOLLY OF ATHEISM, DEMONSTRATED, TO THE CAPACITY OF THE Most Unlearned Reader.

By CLEMENT ELIS, Rector of *Kirkby*, A M. and Author of the *Gentile Sinner*.

Psal. XIV. 1. LIII. 1. *The Fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*

Quocunque te flexeris, ibi Deum videbis occurrentem tibi. *Sen. de Benef.*

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THE

PREFACE.

WHAT *the design of this plain Discourse is, I need not tell any one that reads and understands the Title of it; for by that he may see, that my business therein, is to make it plain to every one that can understand Reason,* That it is a very foolish thing for one to persuade himself, that there is no GOD. *Whether I have done this or no, is a question which I am not concerned to answer any otherwise, than by desiring him that asks it, seriously to read and consider the whole Discourse; and when he hath done so,*

laying aſide all Prejudice and Partiality, to anſwer it to himſelf. If he will not be at this pains, I cannot help it; but as I heartily Bleſs Almighty GOD, *who hath enabled me to do it to my own full ſatisfaction, ſo I moſt humbly beſeech his* Divine Majeſty, *that all who are not ſatisfied with what is here done, may not fail to find all that ſatisfaction elſewhere, which they do not meet with here.*

If any one ſhall ſlight this Diſcourſe, as a thing wholly needleſs; *although he grant it to be convincing, and to prove the thing which I have undertaken to prove: I ſay in the* First *place, That I could heartily wiſh, that it were indeed as needleſs, as he thinks it to be. Nothing ſhould make me more glad, than to be well aſſured, that I have loſt my Labour, upon no other account but this, That no man is in danger of loſing his* GOD *through* Unbelief. *But in the* Next *place, I muſt ſay alſo, That I fear he is miſtaken.*

For

For if this Diſcourſe be Needleſs, *ſuppoſing withal that it be* Convincing, *it muſt be for one of theſe Two Reaſons: Either* First, *becauſe all men do already Believe that there is a* God; *and therefore* all *Diſcourſes on this Subject are needleſs. Or,* Secondly, *Becauſe there is enough already written by others to perſuade men into this Belief, and therefore* this *Diſcourſe is needleſs.*

He that for the former *of theſe Two Reaſons, thinks not only* this, *but* all *Diſcourſes tending to perſuade men to believe there is a* God, *to be needleſs; ſeems to me too little to conſider how moſt men Live in the World. It is a very ſad and uncomfortable thing to be thought on; but alas! a thing every where too viſible, That very many perſons both high and low, behave themſelves in all their ways ſo irreligiouſly and regardleſly of* God, *and of his Holy Laws, that one can hardly imagine how*

they could, did they on purpoſe ſet themſelves to do it, give the World any clearer proof that they have not any ſenſe of GOD, *than now they do. The abounding of all ſorts of* Wickedneſs *and* Prophaneneſs; *and the great indulgence people give every where to themſelves in all manner of* vice *and* vanity; *their* deriding *of ſerious Piety,* mocking *at a conſcienciouſtrictneſs and regularity of life, and even* glorying *in their own ſins, which they know to be againſt the plaineſt laws of* GOD, *and threatned by* him, *with no leſs than* Eternal Damnation; *ſeem to me a moſt evident ſign, That men do not really believe that there is a* GOD. The tranſgreſſion of the wicked (*ſaith the* Pſalmiſt, (Pſal. 36. 1.) ſaith within my heart, that there is no fear of GOD before his eyes. *And whence ſhould it proceed that men fear not GOD, but hence; That either they are not throughly convinced, that there is a GOD to be feared: Or they underſtand ſo little of*

GOD,

GOD, or what *GOD is, that they know not for what he is to be feared; and therefore* (*as 'tis ſaid,* Pſal. 10. 13.) they contemn GOD?

'Tis true indeed, that there are not many among us who do openly deny that there is a GOD; or who will not ſay, that they believe there is one. But 'tis as true alſo, that of many of theſe who make this Profeſſion, we may uſe the words of St. Paul, Tit. 1. 16. They profeſs that they know GOD, but in works they deny him; being abominable and diſobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. *In rehearſing the* Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, *every one of us ſaith for himſelf* ----- I believe in GOD. *But how many of us unſay it again in our unchriſtian and ungodly Converſation? Our* Works *do much trulier ſpeak the ſenſe of our hearts, than our* Words *are wont to do.* Shew me thy Faith without thy Works, and I will

will ſhew thee my Faith by my Works. *So St.* James *challengeth him, that would needs be thought to have a Chriſtian Faith, whilſt he obſerved not the Laws of* GOD. *We may well ſay the ſame to every one that profeſſeth to believe there is a* GOD, *and yet leads an ungodly Life. If our* hearts *and* tongues *do well agree, when we ſay we believe there is a* GOD, *it ſeems one of the hardeſt things in the World to conceive, how our* Lives *ſhould ſo much diſagree with them both. If we did really believe what we ſay we believe, one would think, we ſhould be more* afraid, *than we are, of living ſo unanſwerably to our* Belief; *and more* aſhamed, *than we are of living ſo unagreeably to our* Profeſſion.

If a man would demonſtrate to the world, That he doth but Diſſemble *and* Lye, *when he ſaith he believes, That there is a* GOD; *by what other way could he do this, than by*

living

living a Wicked Life? And why then ſhould we not be convinced of it, that this Profeſſion *of his is indeed a* Lye, *when he proves it to us, as well as ſuch a thing can be proved? He lives and acts in all things, as pleaſeth his own Humour and Luſt; he behaves himſelf as one that owns no Superior Power to reſtrain him from doing wickedly; he breaks all the Laws of* GOD *and Man as far as he hath a Mind and Strength enough to do it; he ſeems impatient of living any longer than he may be his own Maſter, or have the liberty to ſerve the Fleſh; He takes all liberty that he can get, and doth as wickedly as he dare, for fear of men; he regards nothing (beſides his temporal ſafety) but his own Will and Pleaſure: And after all this, what clearer Demonſtration can he give us, That he doth not believe there is a* GOD, *whom he is bound to ſerve?*

And now if this be true, I am ſure there is much need of Diſcourſes againſt Atheiſm.

Wicked-

Wickedneſs *of all ſorts did never more abound nor Triumph in the World, than now it doth: And therefore there never was more need of a* Reformation *of mens Lives and Manners, than now there is: But in vain are all Endeavours to that purpoſe, ſo long as men do not believe that there is a* GOD *over them, to whom they owe a Duty, and are accountable for their whole behaviour. Till men be convinced of this, tho they may poſſibly by force be kept from doing ſome ſorts of Evil, they can never be Reformed, or perſuaded to be good. But if they may once be throughly convinced of this, it may alſo be hoped, That they may be perſuaded to account it both their Duty and their Intereſt to live a godly life; and (as St.* Paul *ſpeaks,* Col. I. 10.) To walk worthy of GOD unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work.

But ſuppoſing ſuch Diſcourſes needful, yet (will ſome ſay) what need was there

of

of this, *ſceing there are already ſo many both* larger *and* learneder *on the ſame ſubject? In anſwer to this, I have no more to ſay, but theſe things.* Firſt, *I do very readily, and with all due thankfulneſs, both to* God, *and the learned* Authors, *acknowledg, That there be many both* larger *and* learneder *Diſcourſes on this ſubiect than this is. But* Secondly, *even for this very Reaſon, that they are ſo* large *and* learned, *they are the leſs ſerviceable to that ſort of People, for whoſe uſe* this *is principally deſign'd. As men of ſtrong Reaſon and good Learning, can make good uſe of long and learned Diſcourſes; and receive much benefit by them; So men of weak Underſtandings, and of little or no Learning, ſtand in need of* ſhort *and* plain *Diſcourſes, ſuch as they can from their neceſſary Buſineſs get time to read; and ſuch, as reading, they are able to Underſtand: For* their *ſake it is, that I publiſh this; and therefore have I uſed as great* plainneſs

of

of Expreſſion in it as poſſibly I could; and yet I am very ſure of it, no more than is needful to make them underſtand it. No man can deny but ſuch people ought to live Religiouſly, *as well as others; and therefore ought to be well grounded in the* firſt Principles *of Religion. And they muſt be taught in ſuch a way as they are able to learn, if we deſign to teach them any thing; and therefore in teaching them, we muſt uſe both ſuch* Arguments, *and ſuch* Language, *as are not too hard for them; or we loſe our labour, and they all the benefit they ſhould reap by it.*

If this be not enough to excuſe *me, at leaſt, for Publiſhing this Diſcourſe, and for Writing it too, with ſo much plainneſs, as, if I be not deceiv'd, I have done: I will only add this, That I had rather be blamed for being impertinent by them, who either need it not themſelves, or ſee not the need that others have of it; than bear the*

rebuke

rebuke of my own Conſcience, for not doing, what I am verily perſuaded to be very needful, in the beſt manner I could do it; tho not half ſo well as another might have done it.

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THE FOLLY OF ATHEISM.

WE find Wicked men, or such as have no Religion, by the *Holy Ghost* himself, in Scripture, frequently called *Fools:* And how hard soever it may be to make such a *fool* understand or acknowledg his own Name, we are very sure he deserves it; because *the Spirit of Truth* (as the *Holy Ghost* is called, *Joh.* 16. 13.) hath given it him. The Man of a wicked Life, if he have any thoughts at all of GOD, must think either *That there is a* GOD, or *That there is none.* If he thinks *That there is a* GOD, he must needs be a *fool* for living wickedly, and wilfully provoking GOD's Wrath and indignation against himself, which he knows himself unable either to withstand or indure. If

he thinks *That there is no* GOD; the *Holy Ghoſt*, by the mouth of *David*, hath told us twice over for our better aſſurance, That he is a *fool* for that. *The fool* (ſaith he) *hath ſaid in his heart, There is no GOD*, Pſal. 14. 1. 53. 1 And indeed, the truth of what *He* hath told us, is as clear to every one who hath Reaſon, and will uſe it to any good purpoſe, as the Light it ſelf can be to him, who hath and will make uſe of his ſight.

To make this plain to the meaneſt capacity, is my preſent buſineſs; and to this end, in the firſt place, I deſire that theſe three things may be conſider'd in the words of the *Holy Ghoſt*, which, I ſay, contain ſo clear a Truth:

1. What is ſaid; *There is no GOD.*
2. How 'tis ſaid; *In his heart.*
3. Who hath ſaid it; *The fool hath ſaid.*

1. That which is ſaid is this; *There is no GOD.* Doth he who ſaith this, underſtand what he ſaith? If he do not, he is a *fool* for ſaying he knows not what. Doth he know what the word [GOD] ſignifies? If he do not, he ſaith he knows not what. GOD, is *He that made the World and all things therein; the LORD of Heaven and Earth; who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;*

in

in whom we live, and move, and have our being, Acts 17. 24, 25, 28. This is that which all the World hath ever meant by this word [GOD]: The *First* of all *Beings*, who is of himself from all Eternity, without beginning; which gave being to all things that ever were, and in which, as in the first Fountain, is all *Being*, and *Life*, and *Power*, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*: *Of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things, to whom be glory for ever, Amen.* Rom. 11. 36.

This then is it which is said: 'Tho there 'be a World, yet it had no Maker. As 'much as to say, Tho' there be a stately, a 'useful, a richly furnished, and wisely con-'trived House, yet it had no Builder. Tho' 'there be many things, yet was there no first 'Cause of their Being; Tho' all things are 'disposed in a very wonderful wise order, 'yet was there no wise Orderer of them. 'We Men, who were not always, came into 'this World, no body knows how; We are 'provided for here, no body knows by 'whom; We are dayly going hence, no body 'knows whither; We have no Maker to 'whom we owe our being; no Owner whose 'we are; no Preserver whom we are to 'thank for any thing; no LORD, or Go-'vernour, whom we are to obey; to whom 'we must be accountable; whose favour or

'diſpleaſure we need to regard: We may do 'what we will with our ſelves, and all we 'can to any other, whether it be good or 'hurt. We may get whatever we can, by 'any means, for our ſelves, and from others; 'we may do what we will with it, when we 'have got it. All Religion is a vain thing; 'and Civil Government is but a crafty con-'trivance of Men. We are under no Laws, 'but ſuch as we pleaſe to make to our ſelves. *Who is Lord over us?* Pſal. 12. 4. This is it that is ſaid, in ſaying, *There is no* GOD. And ſurely there does not appear any wiſdom in all this.

2. He that ſaith this, ſaith it *in his heart.* He is not ſo ignorant of GOD, as one who never heard of any ſuch thing. If any one be ſo ignorant, 'tis certain he's a *fool,* and greatly to be pitied for his folly: But in what part of the World he ſhould be found, I know not. He that ſaith in his heart, *there is no GOD,* talks of him within himſelf, and therfore hath heard of him. Yet ſome who have heard of GOD, are wholly careleſs and regardleſs of him, and very indifferent whether he be or no; their *hearts* are at reſt within them, and ſeem unconcern'd about this matter: This is great folly, and 'tis well if there be not many ſuch Fools, of whom it may be ſaid, *GOD is not in all their thoughts,*

Pſal.

Pſal. 10. 4. Some there may be alſo, who wiſh with all their *hearts*, and could *heartily* deſire that there were no GOD, that ſo, without all fear of him, they might live as they liſt. All theſe are Fools; but he that *ſaith in his heart there is no GOD*, ſeems to outgo all theſe: He is come to a concluſion about it, and makes himſelf confident of it. 'Tis true, indeed, he ſeems not yet ſo fool-hardy, as openly to ſay it with his Tongue: Tho' ſome Men are grown ſo impudent, as to boaſt of their folly, and to call it Wit to talk prophanely; and ſome parts of the World are ſo over-run with bruitiſhneſs as to ſuffer this: Yet moſt men, if they be not more modeſt, are however, more cunning than to ſpeak out all that they think. Tho' therefore they think *there is no* GOD, yet are they ſenſible how much it concerns them, that others ſhould not be taught to think ſo too, or ſo much as know that they think ſo. If they ſhould bring others to think as they do, they might ſoon be made to pay dearly for teaching them this leſſon; for then would all thoſe others take to themſelves the ſame liberty of doing what they liſt, as they deſire to have, and the World would become a very unſafe place for them to live in. He therefore that ſaith *there is no GOD*, is content to ſay it *in his heart* only; and can be very well content too, that

all but himſelf ſhould think otherwiſe for his own ſafety; yea, leſt all they who think there is a GOD, ſhould begin to ſtand upon their guard againſt him, as an Enemy to Mankind (as they have good reaſon to account him): Tho' he be ſo fooliſh, as to ſay *in his heart, there is no GOD*; yet is he ſo cunning, as to ſay with his mouth among others, *I believe in GOD.*

3. He that *ſaith in his heart there is no God*, is *the fool*: No wiſe Man ever ſaid it. *The fear of the LORD, that is wiſdom*, Job 28. 28. *The knowledg of the HOLY is underſtanding*, Prov. 9. 10. *The fear of the LORD, is the beginning of knowledg*, Prov. 1. 7. *and of wiſdom; And a good underſtanding have they that keep his commandments*, Pſ. 111. 10. *But fools deſpiſe wiſdom and inſtruction*, Prov. 1. 7. *And the heart of fools proclaimeth fooliſhneſs*, Prov. 12. 23. But what *fool* is he that ſaith this? In the language of the *Holy Ghoſt*, the *fool* is he that goes on in a courſe of ſinning. Of him and his Fellows, *David* gives us this account in thoſe two *Pſalms*, the 14th, and 51ſt, *They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doth good. The LORD looked down from Heaven upon the children of men, to ſee if there were any that did underſtand and ſeek GOD: They are all gone aſide, they are altogether*

gether become filthy, there is none that doth good, no not one. The *fool* then, is the habitual sinner, who being deeply in love with his sin, cannot indure to think of parting with it. If there be a GOD, he knows he must very dearly pay for sinning against him; and therefore so long as he believes there is a GOD, he cannot enjoy his sins in quietness. He has therefore no way left him but one to sin without a continual disturbance of mind from the checks of his own Conscience, and that is, As much as he can, to banish the belief, and even all thoughts of GOD far from him. This then for the love of his sins he is resolved upon; and tho' it be very hard for him who hath his eye-sight, to open his eyes, and not see the Light; yet he makes a shift so long to wink against the light, till at last he quite loseth his sight: So long he strives aagainst the belief of a GOD, that at length no Arguments can persuade him to believe. Resisting the Truth, GOD justly punisheth him with his own desire, and hides the Truth from him for ever: *Because they received not the love of the truth,* &c. *GOD* (saith St. *Paul*) *shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lye: That they might be damn'd who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness,* 2 Thess. 2. 10, 11, 12. *As they did not like to retain*

GOD in their knowledg, GOD gives them over to a reprobate mind, Rom. 1. 28. And 'tis moſt juſt with GOD thus to deal with ſuch obſtinate Fools; I mean, to hide himſelf for ever from them, who have a long time done all that ever they could, not to ſee him. Hence the Sinner grows more and more a Fool, and at laſt arrives at the Fool's confidence, to believe whatever he has a mind to; *He ſaith in his heart there is no GOD:* And *he that truſteth in his own heart, is a fool*, Prov. 28. 26.

Now, having ſeen theſe Three things, *What is ſaid, How 'tis ſaid*, and *Who hath ſaid it*; We are to conſider how well he deſerves the name of *Fool* for ſaying it: *That is*, for perſuading himſelf to believe, or for making himſelf confident, That *there is no GOD*. And this his Folly will undeniably appear very great, to every one that takes notice but of Three things, which are all very viſible:

1. He is Confident, where he cannot have any, even the leaſt ground of Aſſurance.

2. He is Confident, where his Confidence can do no good, but will do much hurt.

3. He is Confident, where all the reaſon in the world is againſt his Confidence.

If

If then there be ſuch a thing in the world as a *fool*, he that *ſaith in his heart*, or is confident that *there is no* GOD, muſt needs be a *Fool*. For,

1. He that is confident *there is no GOD*, is confident where he cannot have any the leaſt ground of aſſurance; *that is*, he is confident of that which he cannot pretend to know. And is not he a *fool* that pleaſeth himſelf with ſuch a groundleſs confidence as this, and ventures his ſoul on that whereof he cannot ſay, that he is in any meaſure ſure? No man was ever yet ſo vain as to undertake to prove *that there is no GOD*. Some have been either ſo dull that they could not, or ſo ſtubborn that they would not ſee or confeſs they ſaw reaſon enough to convince them *that there is a* GOD. And ſome have been ſo daring as to do their utmoſt endeavour to prove, that it is not altogether neceſſary that there *muſt* be one, or that 'tis poſſible there *may* be none. But either that 'tis impoſſible that there ſhould be a GOD, or that of a certainty there is no ſuch thing, none hath ever attempted to prove, with what confidence ſo ever he talks of this matter. Sum up all that all the *Atheiſts* in the world have at any time been able to ſay againſt the being of a GOD, it amounts to no more but this, *It may be there is a* GOD, *and it may be there is not*. Which

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is all one as to ſay, They know not whether there be a GOD or no. So that even whilſt the *Atheiſt* moſt confidently denies that there is a GOD, he is forced to confeſs, that for any thing he knows to the contrary, there is one. Only he imagines there may be no GOD; and as he imagines it to be, ſo he would fain have it to be, and therefore he is confident it is juſt as he imagins it may be, and would gladly have it be. And would not any of us laugh at that man, who talks with all confidence imaginable of a thing, as if he were ſure of it; and yet when he is askt, how he came to know it, can give no wiſer an anſwer than this, I fain would have it ſo, and I conceive it may poſſibly be ſo, and I am not yet ſatisfied it is not as I think it may be, and therefore I am very confident 'tis juſt as I ſay? Would we not, I ſay, laugh at this as the anſwer of a *Fool?*

II. It is folly enough for one to be Confident without a reaſon or ground of Aſſurance; yet is it a much greater folly on no good ground to be confident, where it is exceedingly dangerous to be confident, and where the confidence doth certainly much hurt, and can do no good. And yet ſuch is his confidence, who is confident *there is no* GOD.

When

Where there are two Opinions, whereof one knows not which is trueſt; and there is danger in following the one, and none in following the other; it muſt needs be acknowledg'd to be a great folly, to chuſe to follow that opinion wherein there is danger, rather than that wherein there is none. If then there be no *danger* at all in believing there is a GOD, and a great deal of danger in thinking there is none: He muſt needs be a *fool* that thinks *there is no* GOD. Now theſe two things will quickly appear to be true.

1. To believe there is a GOD, (even tho there were none) doth much good, and no hurt.
2. To think there is no GOD (tho it were true) doth much hurt and no good.

1. To believe there is a GOD, (even tho there were none) doth much good and no hurt. It will eaſily be granted by the *Atheiſt* himſelf, that if there be a GOD (as we certainly believe there is) to believe it, is not only our duty, but our higheſt concern. If we have a *Maker*, *Preſerver*, and *Governour*, it is very fit and neceſſary, and can no way be hurtful, but exceeding good and profitable for us to own him, and by all means to endeavour to pleaſe him, and to keep in his favour; ſeeing that both we and all things are in his hand and power, and ſo totally depend upon him,

him, that we can neither be happy, nor indeed *be* at all, but by his Bleſſing, Protection, and Providence: *For in him we live, and move, and have our being*, Act. 17. 28. *We are his people, and the ſheep of his paſture*, Pſal. 100. 3. But I ſay, that tho there were no GOD (which yet cannot be) to believe that there is one, would do much good and no hurt at all.

It would do much good, becauſe 'tis plain, that this belief (which nothing elſe cou'd do) keeps the world in good order, and makes *men ſociable*, *governable*, and *ſerviceable* to one another. This belief of a *God*, is that which keeps us from deſtroying our ſelves by *Laſciviouſneſs*, *Intemperance*, *and Luxury*; and from devouring and ruining one another by *malice*, *envy*, *pride*, *covetouſneſs*, and *oppreſſion*. So that the world owes its happineſs to this belief. In ſhort then, this belief helps us to live *ſoberly*, and *righteouſly*, and *godly* in this preſent world, *Tit.* 2. 12. and to die comfortably in hope of better things than this world affords, when we go out of it. And this certainly is all very good.

But now this *belief* of a GOD can do no hurt at all. For ſeeing it naturally inclines men to do good, and reſtrains men from doing hurt, it ſelf can no way be hurtful. If it can, let the *Atheiſt* himſelf ſhew us what the hurt of it is, even ſuppoſing there were no GOD.

Is

Is this the hurt it doth us, That it keeps us from uſing that liberty which were there no GOD, and we believ'd it, we might freely uſe? Indeed, as I know not, if there were no GOD, what ſhould make it unlawful for any one to uſe all the liberty he could get; ſo I doubt as little, but if men thought there were none, they would uſe a great deal more liberty than they do; but then 'tis only becauſe they are fools, and conſider not their own good. A wiſe man, who is govern'd, not by paſſion, but by reaſon, as every man ſhould be, would uſe no more liberty of that kind which wicked men moſt covet, than GOD now allows us, were he ſure that there were no GOD. For GOD allows us all things that are for the *good* of our ſelves and mankind, and he forbids us nothing but what viſibly tends to the hurt of our ſelves or others. It can be therefore no other liberty but that of doing hurt, which the belief of a GOD reſtrains us from; and to reſtrain us from doing hurt, cannot be hurtful. A wiſe man, I ſay, would not uſe this liberty tho he might. For he wiſely conſiders, that all men would have the ſame right as he to uſe that liberty; and if they ſhould do ſo, as there could be no reaſon why they ſhould not as well as he, there could be no Society, no Government, no ſafe living by one another in the world.

Or

Or in the next place, is this the hurt which the belief of a GOD would do, ſuppoſing there were none, that in ſome caſes we muſt ſuffer evils, which we ſhould not need to ſuffer, were there no GOD? We are poor, it may be, and yet for fear of GOD we dare not ſteal nor rob, nor cheat, to relieve our ſelves. We ſuffer wrong, and for fear of GOD we dare not revenge our ſelves, and ſuch like. 'Tis true indeed, the belief of a GOD obligeth us to ſuffer rather than to do evil; But it will be found to do us no hurt but good in this. Which that we may diſcern, we are to think upon theſe following things.

1. Remember, that ſome of the evils we ſuffer, are unavoidable by us, whether there be a GOD or no. *That is*, they are ſuch as if there be a GOD, none but he can prevent or remove; and if there be no GOD, it is not in our power to do either. Now in ſuch caſes it is a man's wiſdom to ſuffer them with as little trouble to himſelf as he can, ſeeing he muſt bear them, do what he can: Impatience, fretting and rage, do not leſſen, but double the ſuffering, whatever it be. And then the belief of a GOD binds us in ſuch caſes to no more, but to ſuffer patiently, and in humble ſubmiſſion to his will, and in hope that doing ſo, *All things work together for good to us*, Rom. 8. 28. *And that the light affliction, which*

is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. 4. 17. Seeing then ſuch evils muſt be born, all the hurt the belief of GOD doth us, is to enable us to bear them more eaſily, even as much as he that ſuffers in hope, may ſuffer more cheerfully than he that has no hope.

2. Obſerve, that ſome of theſe evils are ſuch, as we ſuffer through the wickedneſs of men. And here we ſhould remember, *firſt*, That were there no belief or fear of GOD among men, where we now ſuffer one ſuch evil, we ſhould ſuffer a thouſand. I hope then the belief of a GOD doth us no hurt in this, that it makes our ſufferings fewer than otherwiſe they would be. *Secondly*, Remember, 'tis for want of this belief, that men are ſo forward to hurt one another; for GOD forbids it: and if men believed to the purpoſe that there is a GOD, forbidding all Injuries on pain of damnation, they would not dare to do wrong. Who then will ſay, that the belief of a GOD can be hurtful, when 'tis only the want of it whence all ſuch hurts ariſe?

Well, But it will be yet ſaid, That were it not for fear of GOD, we might ſome way or other prevent, or remove ſuch Evils as theſe. For a fuller anſwer to this,

3. Take

3. Take notice, That of this kind of Evils, ſome are very ſlight, ſmall, and eaſily tolerable; others are very grievous, and not eaſily ſupportable. If the Evils we ſuffer one from another be very ſmall, and eaſie to be born; will not a wiſe man, whether there be a GOD, or no, rather be content to bear them patiently, even for the ſake of his own eaſe and quiet, much more for the peace and quiet of the Neighbourhood; than diſturb both himſelf and his Neighbours, by beginning, and continuing a quarrel about little things; and that when the iſſue is doubtful, and he cannot be ſure he ſhall be a gainer in the end? If one have a mind to end quarrels ſpeedily, and to live in peace and quietneſs, which certainly is a thing very deſireable; to put up in patience and ſilence light and trivial wrongs, is both the ſhorteſt, and eaſieſt; the cheapeſt, and moſt obliging way. And this is it that in ſuch caſes the belief of a GOD doth bind us to. If the Evils we ſuffer from others be very grievous, and not eaſily ſupportable; the Laws of GOD do not forbid us fairly and legally to right and relieve our ſelves; much leſs do they command us to lay our ſelves open to ſuch Evils, or not to guard our ſelves as well as we can againſt them; or to ſuffer Evil-doers to paſs unpuniſhed. All that

GOD

GOD forbids in ſuch caſes, is ſpiteful, and unneceſſary private revenge. Now a wiſe man again, whether there were a GOD or no, would take this very courſe that GOD now commands, and not that which he forbids. If he be in want or poverty, he would uſe no illegal means of relief; if he be wrong'd, he would uſe no illegal ways of righting himſelf. Why? becauſe he conſiders he thus makes himſelf his own Judge, and his own Carver, and ſo might every one do as well as he, and at this rate there could be no Civil Society or Government; but all men would be let looſe, like ſo many wild beaſts, to prey upon, and devour one another. What hurt then doth the belief of a GOD do us, when it binds us to ſuffer no otherwiſe than any wiſe man would of himſelf do, were he ſure there is no GOD?

Is this the hurt it doth, that it binds us to die, rather than any way to diſhonour GOD; which we need not do, were there no GOD? It is true again, that it binds us to this; and if there were no GOD, we ſhould not be bound to it. Well then, (ſaith the *Atheiſt*) can any one pretend, that this is no hurt, for a man to loſe his life, and all that's dear to him, at once irrecoverably, for the ſake of GOD, if yet there be no GOD? To this I ſay, If there be any hurt at all in this, yet is it much leſs than that which will ne-

ceſſarily follow the denying of a GOD, yea tho he were not. And this muſt be granted when theſe few things have been duly conſider'd.

Firſt, We muſt all die, whether there be a GOD or no. I cannot think that any one of thoſe who doubt whether there be a GOD, doubts too whether or no he ſhall die; he is, he thinks, too ſure of that. And further yet, we none of us know either *when* or *how* we ſhall die. It may be, to morrow, or before; and it may be too in the moſt painful Agony and Torment.

Therefore, *Secondly*, the worſt that can be in our dying for GOD, is this, That we may ſo be made to die, a little, and we know not how little a while, for ought we know, not one hour or minute before the time when otherwiſe we ſhould have died. Or we may be made to die in torment; and yet, for ought we know, in far leſs torment than otherwiſe we ſhould have died, and it may be, at the ſame time.

Thirdly, It cannot be any great hurt to loſe a few days of an uncertain and troubleſome life; and ſuch days, as for ought we know, would have brought ſo many evils along with them, as would have made us wiſh a thouſand times over, that we had died ſooner, and had never ſeen ſo much as one of them.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, If all men were perſuaded that there is no GOD, the wickedneſs of men would ſoon make the world ſo uneaſie a place to us, that he would think himſelf the happieſt man, that could ſooneſt find his way out of it.

All this conſidered, 'tis evident, That even the fainteſt hope that any one could conceive, of enjoying a Bleſſed Eternity with GOD, muſt be enough to make him ſet light by the loſs of a few days more of life in this world. He that cannot be ſure that there is no God, (as no man can be) and much more he that but thinks there is a GOD, muſt needs be a Fool, if he had rather live a while to diſhonour GOD, and fall under his Wrath, than dye a little before his time, if he thinks it pleaſing to GOD, and rewardable by him. For ſuppoſing it uncertain to him, whether there be a GOD or no, this were plainly to chuſe a worſe uncertain thing before a better. It were to chuſe a few ſhort days of life, which he knows not whether he ſhall have or no, or whether they will be worth having or no, yea, whether or no they will give him cauſe to repent that ever he had one of them; rather than a life of Eternal Bleſſedneſs with GOD, which, if there be a GOD, he is ſure to have; or rather than to ſecure himſelf from an endleſs ſtate of intolerable Torments,

which, if there be a GOD, he is ſure to fall into, who lives to GOD's Diſhonour. And now where's the hurt of dying for GOD, even tho there were none?

Is it this, in the laſt place, That ſuch an one ſhall be diſappointed in his Hope? Is it not (ſaith the *Atheiſt*) a very miſerable thing, to ſuffer and dye in hope of good things, and after he has paid ſo dear for his hope, find it defeated in a moment? Well; but let me tell the *Atheiſt*, he will find it a much more miſerable thing, to have been confident all his life long that there is no GOD, and then in a moment to find there is one, to his everlaſting ſorrow. However, in anſwer to what he here objects; *Firſt*, It is certain, That if there be a GOD, his hope who died for GOD, is not defeated; and if there be no GOD, then the defeating of his hope can be no miſery or hurt to him. He that denies a GOD, denies a future ſtate after death, and ſo according to him, the whole Man, Soul and Body, dies at once, as beaſts do; and has no more ſenſe of any thing after death, than they have. Now that can be no miſery or hurt, which cannot be felt: And the fruſtration of his hope, cannot be felt by him who has no ſenſe of any thing. If the man that's once dead, feels nothing, whatever he has loſt, his loſs is nothing at all to him. Whilſt ſuch an one lived,

ved, his hope made his Life pleaſant, and his Sufferings tolerable; it heightned his Joys, and it mitigated his Sorrows; it was his comfort both in life and death; and now he is dead, if there be a GOD, he enjoys all he hoped for, and is glad he took the rough way to Heaven, and thinks himſelf well paid for his pains and ſufferings; and if there be no GOD, he is in as good a condition as all others are, neither better nor worſe; and as they are not ſenſible of their paſt Pleaſures, no more is he of his paſt Sorrows. His belief whilſt he lived, did both himſelf and others much good, and could never hurt either himſelf or others, living or dead.

2. To think there is no GOD, (even if there be none) doth much hurt, and no good at all.

If there be a GOD, (as we cannot doubt but there is) the *Atheiſt* will not deny, That his opinion is the moſt pernicious and miſchievous thing in the world. To deprive ones ſelf for ever of *his* Favour, and to expoſe ones ſelf to *his* unſupportable Wrath, who alone can ſave or deſtroy as he pleaſeth; To loſe Eternal Joys, and run into Eternal Torments, and merely for the enjoyment of a few days of fruitleſs ſin and vanity, and for the humouring of a lump of fleſh, which

muſt within a few days corrupt, and rot in dirt; can a man poſſibly do himſelf greater hurt than this?

And ſuppoſe the *Atheiſt* were in the right, what good could his opinion do him? Nay, what hurt would it not do both him and all the world, were it generally received? Whilſt he is of this opinion, he enjoys a few beaſtly Pleaſures, and is delighted to live as beaſts do, and to think that he ſhall dye as they do too. O excellent Priviledge! What is it elſe, that he can make much of this opinion for, but only that he thinks himſelf at liberty to do as he liſts? Well; but whilſt he is ſo fond of a bruiſh and licentious life, that he cannot endure to hear of GOD, becauſe of his love to it; I would deſire to know of him, *Firſt*, If this be no trouble to him, That he knows this voluptuous Life ſhall ſo quickly be at an end, and that in ſo ſhort a time, yea he knows not how ſoon, all that he now thinks himſelf happy in, ſhall be gone for ever? *Next*, If it be no trouble to him to reſtrain himſelf from what he moſt loves, for fear of bringing Sickneſſes, Pains, and Death upon himſelf; or that he has at any time ſo brought theſe and other like evils upon himſelf, whereby he is become unable to find any reliſh or pleaſure in the things he loves, and has nothing left him to eaſe his troubl.? *Again*; What he has to admi-

administer any comfort or refreshment to him, if he fall into any kind of affliction or distress, when he can taste nothing but bitterness in this life, and yet hath not the least hopes of any other? And *lastly*, If it do not trouble him, when ever he thinks of it, that he cannot be sure that his Opinion is true, and that, for ought he knows to the contrary, there may be a God, and he may the next moment cast him into Hell for the life he now leads? I cannot but think, but when the *Atheist* is at any time awakened to the exercise of his reason, and thinks of these things, he cannot much boast of the good his Opinion doth himself; nay, that he cannot deny, but 'tis hurtful to him.

And should it be once embraced generally by others, what would become of him and all the world? There would be nothing in a short time visible, but disorder and confusion, and all manner of mischief and misery, were men once persuaded, That there is no GOD, no rewarder of the good, no punisher of the wicked; and that there is nothing either to be hoped for, or feared, but in this life only. Had men none over them to keep them in awe, but weak men like themselves, what could be expected, but that they should fall a tearing and eating up one another? Would not every one think it his concern, and his

right too, to make the beſt he could of this preſent life to himſelf, as well as he, if he thought there were nothing either better or worſe to be expected, than what this life affords? Would not every one who is perſuaded that this world is all that ever he muſt enjoy, uſe his utmoſt cunning and endeavour, without reſpect to any other perſon, or any regard to Right or Wrong, to pick and chuſe, and carve out for himſelf as great a ſhare of it as he poſſibly could; yea, tho he muſt dig through the very bowels of all other men, to come at the things he deſired to have? Might not any one challenge as much Right to every thing that lay within his reach, as any other whatſoever? And would not every one catch that could, yea and kill too, or do any thing elſe he could, that he might catch? If it be true, that there is no GOD, to whom all are bound to ſubmit, what Law can any one think himſelf bound to obey, but his own Will? And would not every one be as free as he could make himſelf, and ſtrive to have his own will, rather than to be ſubject to another's? Would not every one endeavour to make himſelf Maſter of as much, and as many as he could? And would not this ſtriving for the Maſtery, and ſcrambling who ſhould get moſt, bring all things to confuſion? Could any thing but mere force and violence bring

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or keep men under Government? And would men any longer bear ſo uneaſie a yoke, whenever they could find out any way to break or ſhake it off? All the world thus would be turn'd into a Field of War and Blood, and no man could think himſelf ſafe from his Neighbour. He that is ſtrongeſt, or could make his Party the ſtrongeſt for a time, could not promiſe himſelf that he ſhould long continue ſo, and not be undermined by the wiles of the weaker, or by the treacheries or revolts of his own men. And they who are weakeſt, muſt be ſure, whilſt they are ſo, to endure the inſolencies, and lye at the mercy of the ſtronger. No man could call either his goods or his life his own, ſeeing there could be nothing to hinder any one that had ſtrength and malice enough, from invading them, or endeavouring to advance himſelf upon the ruins of any one whom he found ſtanding in his way to what he covets.

All men may plainly ſee, That Religion, were it generally practiſed throughout the world, would ſoon make it happy; and that the good order that is in the world, is wholly owing to the ſenſe men have of a GOD; and that therefore there is ſo little good order in the world at this day, becauſe there is ſo little ſincere Religion, or true ſenſe of GOD in it. And if there were no ſenſe of GOD in

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it, there would be no good order at all. Tho it were true then, That there is no GOD, I dare ſay, the whole world would ſoon begin to wiſh it falſe; yea, and rather than all men ſhould think there is none, the *Atheiſt* himſelf would wiſh it falſe too. All men would quickly find reaſon enough to curſe the man that firſt diſcovered ſo miſchievous a Truth. But now ſeeing no man can poſſibly be aſſured, That it is true; what a Fool is he that perſuades himſelf it is, to no other end, but that he may be more free to do miſchief, and by doing ſo, teach others to do the like; thus putting himſelf, and the reſt of mankind into a poſture of War, and into the moſt deplorable condition imaginable? I mean, into that of enjoying no quiet or ſafety in this world, no comfort or ſatisfaction in going out of it, and the danger of ſuffering more intolerable evils, than any one can now conceive, whenever death ſhall call him hence.

III. The third Argument to prove him a *fool*, who is confident *there is no GOD*, is this: He is Confident, where all the Reaſon in the World is againſt his Confidence. And to make this good, I lay this down as a certain principle: *It is a ſufficient reaſon to believe that a thing is, when it's being is diſcovered unto us, all thoſe ways, whereby we can conceive*

ceive that ſuch a thing can be diſcovered unto us, if indeed it be, and may be known. If then GOD hath made himſelf known unto us all thoſe ways, whereby we can conceive he can be made known, if he be; we have all the Reaſon in the World to believe him to be, and ſo all the Reaſon in the World is againſt his Confidence that denies GOD to be. He is a *fool* that deſires or calls for more than this; for that is all one as if he ſhould ſay, I will not believe that there is a GOD, 'till he be made known to me more ways than he can be made known to me, though there be one.

Now let any one ſay, what Evidence he would have to convince him that there is a GOD, and I will ſhew him that he hath it; unleſs he would have ſuch Evidence as cannot be given, tho' there be a GOD. All things cannot be diſcover'd by every kind of Evidence, tho' they really are, and may be known. A Voice or Sound cannot be known by Seeing; yet we are ſure it is, becauſe we hear it. A Colour cannot be known by Hearing; but we are ſure it is, becauſe we ſee it. Sweet and Bitter cannot be known by ſeeing or hearing; yet we know them by Taſting. He's a Fool then that will not believe any of theſe to be, unleſs he have ſuch an evidence of it as cannot be given, whilſt he

he hath that which can; or, Who will not believe there is a Colour, becauſe he cannot hear or ſmell it, whilſt he Sees it? or thinks there is no Voice, becauſe he cannot ſee, touch, or taſt it, tho' he Hears it? And ſo of the reſt.

What evidence then would a Man have to aſſure him that there is a GOD? GOD is by Nature a *Spirit*, Joh. 4. 24. and ſo *Inviſible*, 1 Tim. 1. 17. *whom no man hath ſeen, nor can ſee*, vid. 1 *Tim.* 6. 16. *Joh.* 1. 18. 1 *Joh.* 4. 12. He's a *fool* then that will not believe that there is a GOD, unleſs he ſee him: And as much a Fool is he, that will not believe him to be, unleſs he can hear him ſpeak, or feel him: For GOD being a pure *Spirit*, without a *Body*, or *bodily qualities*, hath neither a Voice, ſuch as bodily things have, whereby he may be heard with our Ears; nor other quality whereby he may be felt with our Hands, any more than he hath Colour or Shape to be ſeen with our Eyes.

We muſt, if we will be reaſonable, be ſatisfied with ſuch Evidences of an *Inviſible Spirit*, as an *Inviſible Spirit* can give us of its ſelf: And ſuch evidences of himſelf GOD hath given unto us; and by all ſuch ways, as we can think on, has revealed himſelf unto us, as one of infinite *Power*, *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs*, our *Maker*, *Preſerver*, and *Gover-*

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nor. And how can we conceive, that He, who is in himſelf Inviſible, ſhould make this manifeſt unto us, but by ſome or all of theſe ways?

I. By ſome ſuch audible and viſible ſignifications and tokens of his Being and Will, as we are capable of underſtanding.

II. By imprinting a ſenſe of himſelf in our minds, making us not only capable of perceiving, but inclined to acknowledg him.

III. By doing ſuch works as are the viſible effects of ſuch a Being, Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs.

If there be a GOD, ſome of theſe ways he may, and otherwiſe we cannot conceive how he ſhould be known unto men. And therefore if he have all theſe ways manifeſted himſelf unto us, he is a *Fool* that doth not own him.

I. It muſt be granted very reaſonable to expect, That if there be a GOD who is our LORD and GOVERNOR, he ſhould give us ſuch ſignifications and tokens of his *Being* and *Will*, as we may know him, and how to behave our ſelves towards him. And

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if it be ſuch an evidence of him, that the *Atheiſt* would have for his ſatisfaction, I ſay he hath it in that which we call GOD's WORD in the Holy SCRIPTURE.

If he ſay, He would believe there is a GOD, becauſe of his WORD, if he were ſure that it is GOD's Word; I ask, What he means by ſaying ſo? Is it this, That he would believe there is a GOD, becauſe of his Word, were he firſt ſure that there is a GOD whoſe Word it may be? This is all one, as to ſay, That what he calls for as an evidence of a GOD, can be no evidence; for he cannot be perſuaded 'tis his Word, till he be firſt ſure that He is: This is to play the *Fool* downright; He will not believe there is a GOD, till GOD hath revealed himſelf by his Word; GOD reveals himſelf by his Word, and he will not believe it to be his Word, becauſe he is not ſure there is a GOD. If he ſay, he means no more but this, That what you ſhew him for the Word of GOD, is not ſuch as may be thought worthy of GOD, or has not enough in it to convince one, that it is not a Forgery of man? If this be his meaning, then I ask him, What is wanting to it to make it appear worthy of GOD, and not to be a Forgery of man? If he cannot ſhew this, and yet excepts againſt it, he's a *Fool*; for either that evidence wherein

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no defect can be diſcover'd, muſt be a ſufficient evidence; or there can be no ſuch thing as a ſufficient evidence in the world.

Well then; We ſay, GOD hath revealed Himſelf and his Will by clear ſignifications of both, in his Word. And this Word we have now written in a Book, which we call the **Bible** and the **Scripture**. If this *Scripture* or Writing be true, then is it the *Word of* GOD, for ſo much it affirmeth of it ſelf. The Truth of it therefore is the only thing we are to inquire into. And to make this Enquiry as ſhort as may be, let it be conſidered, That this Book is made up of divers ſmaller Books, whereof ſome are called, The Books of the *Old Teſtament*; others of them, The Books of the *New* one: And we need do no more but inquire into the Truth of the latter of theſe at preſent; for if what is written in theſe, be true; then is that ſo too, which is written in the former: For theſe bear witneſs to the Truth of thoſe. Our *Saviour* in the *New Teſtament* approves of the *Law of Moſes*, and of the *Prophets*, and of the *Pſalms*, which make up the *Old Teſtament*, Luke 24. 44. And of the ſame, St. *Paul* ſaith, *All Scripture is given by inſpiration of God*, 2 Tim. 3. 16. And *St. Peter*, That *the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt*,

Ghoſt, 2 Pet. 1. 12. And the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* ſaith, *That God, who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake in time paſt unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son*, Heb. 1. 1, 2. If then the Writings of the *New Teſtament* be true, the Books of the *Old Teſtament* contain the *Word of* GOD. And to ſatisfie our ſelves that they are true, we need but to underſtand Three Things:

1. That there were ſuch men as are ſaid to have written theſe Books; and that theſe are their Writings.
2. That they were ſufficiently qualified for writing theſe Books.
3. That what they have written, hath all the Characters of Divine Truth.

1. There were once ſuch men as are ſaid to have written theſe Books; and theſe Books were written by them. If any one doubts whether there were once ſuch men as St *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, *John*, *Paul*, *Peter*, *James*, and *Jude*; or that the Books which bear their Names, were written by them; how would he have it proved? Theſe men died about Sixteen hundred Years ago, and therefore he will not ſurely be ſo unreaſonable as to ſay, Shew me the Men, or I will not believe that ever

ever they were. But look what reaſon he hath to believe any thing that was before he was was born, and now he ſeeth not; the ſame he hath to believe that theſe men once were, and that they wrote theſe Books. Hiſtories make expreſs mention of them, one Generation to another, from their time to this, hath preſerved their Memory; and the Books we have, are their laſting Monuments. We have the Teſtimony of all Chriſtians, of all Ages ſince their time, who have own'd theſe Books as theirs, who have commented on them, and written in defence of the Doctrine contained in them; recorded their Travels, and the Churches which they planted: And theſe Witneſſes are no inconſiderable Perſons, but the moſt learned of their times, and ſuch as made the moſt diligent ſearch into the truth; and were ſo well ſatisfied, as to ſhed their blood in vindication of it, and ventured their Salvation upon it. Neither is this all, but we have the teſtimony of their Enemies, of thoſe who perſecuted them unto death, and wrote againſt the Truth which they deliver'd. Now what can any one deſire more than this to ſatisfy him, That there were ſuch men, and that they wrote theſe Books? We have the Books in our hands, and all ſorts of Hiſtorians, Friends and Enemies, making mention of them; and all Chri-

ſtian Churches, being the beſt, moſt learned, and moſt civilized part of the World, acknowledging, receiving, and even unto death maintaining them. Have we not the faith to believe, that there were once ſuch men as *Cyrus*, *Darius*, *Alexander*, or *Julius Cæſar*? Do not we believe that *Cicero*, *Demoſthenes*, *Homer* and *Virgil*, once were, and that we have their Books? Believe we not that we have had Kings of this Realm in former days, and that we have now Laws which they enacted? Nor yet that we had Grandfathers, and Great-Grandfathers, and Inheritances derived from them? And what better Reaſons can we have to believe any of theſe things, than ſuch as we have to believe that theſe men were, and wrote theſe Books? Truly he that will not believe that once a thing was, when all the evidence of its having been is given him, which can be given of any thing paſt; muſt needs be a very unreaſonable Fool, and not to be diſcours'd withal, but laugh'd at. For at this rate, nothing that ever was, and is not now, can be believed, without better evidence of it, than can be given if it was, which is impoſſible.

2. Theſe men were ſufficiently qualified for writing theſe Books. For all that can be thought neceſſary to qualify them for writing

theſe

theſe Books, is, *Firſt*, Sufficient knowledg of the things whereof they wrote; and *Secondly*, Honeſty, to write no other things than what they certainly knew.

1. We cannot in any reaſon ſuſpect them to have wanted ſufficient knowledg, becauſe they had all opportunities of well informing themſelves. They write either of the Life and Deeds of JESUS CHRIST, whereof they were Eye-witneſſes; or of his Doctrine and Preaching, which they were Ear-witneſſes of: Or elſe of the Deeds and Sufferings of themſelves, and their Fellows, whereof they were either Actors and Sufferers, or Spectators. *That which they had ſeen and heard, declared they unto us*; and that in *writing*, as St. *John* ſaith, 1 *Joh.* I. 1, 2, 3. *They have delivered theſe things to us, which from the beginning were eye-witneſſes, and Miniſters of the word. And it ſeem'd good unto them, having had perfect underſtanding of all things from the beginning, to write unto others, that they alſo might know the certainty of theſe things*, as we gather from St. *Luke*, chap. I. v. 2, 3, 4. Now that there was ſuch a Perſon as JESUS CHRIST, that he was born in the Reign of *Auguſtus Cæſar*, and was Crucified in the Regn of *Tiberius Cæſar*, being ſentenced to death by *Pontius Pilate*;

and that he had ſuch *Diſciples* and *Followers*, not only the Teſtimony of *Chriſtians*, but that of *Jews* and *Heathens*, bitter Enemies to Chriſtianity, aſſures us. And what ſhould hinder theſe men to have ſufficient knowledg of what they write?

2. We have no leſs reaſon to believe they were honeſt men, who had no deſign to deceive the World. For

Firſt, It is to be ſeen in their Writings by all who read them, that they profeſſed and taught *Sincerity*, *Truth*, *Simplicity*, *plain* and *upright Dealing*; condemning all *Hypocriſie*, *Lying* and *Guile*, as odious to GOD, and damnable in men; denouncing the heavy wrath and indignation of GOD againſt the Practicers of theſe Vices. And as they taught, ſo they lived; and for this they durſt appeal to all who knew them. *Ye are witneſſes* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *and God alſo, how holily, and juſtly, and unblameably we behaved our ſelves among you*, 1 Theſſ. II. 10. *We have renounced* (ſaith he again) *the hidden things of diſhoneſty, not walking in craftineſs, not handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifeſtation of the truth commending our ſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God*, 2 Cor. IV. 2.

Secondly,

Secondly, For the truth of the chief matters of fact, which they relate; they were bold to appeal to the knowledg of great multitudes then living, who might eaſily have diſproved them, had they told any falſhood. They told them of the wonderful *Birth* and *Life* of JESUS, mentioning the very *time* of his Birth, the *place*, the *manner*; his manifeſtation to the *Shepherds*, to the *Wiſe-men* of the *Eaſt*, his Perſecution by *Herod*, with all the remarkable Circumſtances thereto belonging: His *Doctrine* and *Preaching*, his *Miracles*, ſome whereof thouſands at once taſted of; his *Death* without *Jeruſalem*, notorious to all; his *Reſurrection*, witneſſed by his appearing to hundreds; his viſible *Aſcenſion* into Heaven: his ſending the *Holy Ghoſt* on the Day of *Pentecoſt*, to the aſtoniſhment of many who heard the *Apoſtles* by him enabled to ſpeak to every one in his own Language; and many more things of this kind, concerning ſome of which, St. *Paul* was not afraid to tell *Feſtus* the Governour, in the preſence of King *Agrippa*, *The king knoweth of theſe things, before whom alſo I ſpeak freely; for I am perſuaded that none of theſe things are hidden from him, for this thing was not done in a corner*, Acts XXVI. 26. How eaſie now had it been for the *Jews* to have proved theſe men Lyars, had they been ſo? And

would they not have done it, if they could?

Thirdly, They were men but of a very mean Education, moſt of them, and of no learning; and cannot reaſonably be thought able to contrive, and invent what they write, of their own heads; and when they had done, to defend it ſo bravely as they did, for real truth. It muſt needs be ſuppoſed, they were inſtructed well in their buſineſs; and had a Teacher wiſer, and more powerful too, than themſelves; or indeed (as it will appear) than all the World beſides. And this was well known to be JESUS CHRIST the *Eternal Wiſdom* of GOD; and his Holy *Spirit of Truth*, which He, according to his Promiſe, ſent upon them (*Acts* II.) *to guide them into all truth*, Joh. XVI. 13. 'Twas He alone who could, as he had promiſed, *give them a mouth and wiſdom, which all their adverſaries were not able to gainſay, or reſiſt*, *Luke* XXI. 15. Indeed it appears, whatever their Education had been, they were, when they preached to the World, and wrote, men of good ſenſe and underſtanding; who could teach a *Religion*, which now for above Sixteen hundred years hath prevail'd over the moſt learned part of Mankind: who could diſpute with the Learned *Grecians*, Acts IX. 29. And though the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, the

the moſt Learned *Jews*; Though they of the *Synagogue* of the *Libertines*, and *Cyrenians*, and *Alexandrians*, of *Cicilia* and *Aſia*, diſputed with them; *Acts* VI. 9. Tho the *Philoſophers* of the *Gentiles*, the *Stoicks* and *Epicureans*, encounter'd them, *Acts* XVII. 18. yet were none of theſe able to reſiſt the *Wiſdom*, and the *Spirit* whereby they ſpake, *Acts* VI. 10.

Fourthly, Suppoſing them men of Wit enough for ſuch a Contrivance, yet can they not at the ſame time be thought ſuch Fools too, as to contrive ſuch things without any rational motive or inducement to it; ſurely, they muſt have ſome great things to propound unto themſelves, as the end for which they did this. They well foreſaw, that what they did, would expoſe them to all the Evils of this World. And therefore when they firſt undertook it, they voluntarily left all they had in this World, to follow CHRIST. They were taught by him to *deny themſelves, and to take up the croſs*, Matth. XVI. 24. And told, that they muſt be ſent as *Sheep* in the midſt of *Wolves*; be deliver'd up to *Councils*, and ſcourg'd in the *Synagogues, and hated of all men for his name's ſake*, Matth. X. 16, 17, 22. *That in this world they ſhould have tribulation*, John XVI. 33. and *be perſecuted*, Joh. XV. 20. *Put out of the Synagogues, and*

killed, Joh. XVI. 2. All this they knew, and expected. They went forth to preach a Doctrine, which by the *Wiſe-men* of the World would be accounted *fooliſhneſs*, 1 Cor. I. 23. And look'd on themſelves, as men *ſet forth of God, as it were, appointed to death, and made a ſpectacle to the world*, 1 Cor. IV. 9. *They hungred and thirſted, were naked, and had no certain dwelling-place. Being revil'd, they bleſſed; being perſecuted, they ſuffer'd it; being defamed, they intreated; they were made the filth of the world, and the off-ſcouring of all things*, 1 Cor. IV. 11. 2 Cor. IV. 8. They conſtantly and ſtoutly indured all that befell them; *rejoycing that they were counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for the name of JESUS*, Acts V. 41. Certain then it is, that (as they profeſſed) *Their exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanneſs, nor in guile; neither did they at any time uſe flattering words, nor a cloak of covetouſneſs (as they* call'd *God to witneſs) neither of men ſought they glory*, 1 *Theſſ.* II. 3, 5. No, 'tis plain, they could not propound to themſelves any worldly advantage. Well then, either they did believe what they preach'd, and wrote, to be true, or they did not. If not, then did they, for the ſake of a known and unprofitable *Lye*, forſake all that ſeems good in this World, even whilſt they hoped for nothing in another;

ther; and then they muſt be no longer thought cunning and crafty men, but the ſillieſt fools that ever were, and very mad-men. If they did believe themſelves, and chearfully endured all theſe things for perſuading others to believe, what more can we deſire to ſhew us, that they were honeſt and plain-dealing men?

Fifthly, If it be ſaid, That tho they were men of good ſenſe and competent underſtanding, yet as honeſt well-meaning men are eaſily deceiv'd, ſo might they be by his cunning whom they follow'd; and being ſeduced by him, might in ſimplicity of mind endeavour to deceive others. This will appear a vain Conceit, when 'tis conſider'd, that he whom they follow'd, was JESUS, a Perſon well known, whilſt on Earth, for his Life and Converſation among men. He taught openly; and what he taught, notwithſtanding his Divine Authority to command belief upon his bare word, he did not bid them ſimply believe, but try and examine. The *Jews*, to whom he preach'd, had all along received the *Scriptures* of the *Old Teſtament* as the *Word of God*; and for what he taught of himſelf, he appeals to thoſe Scriptures. *Search the Scriptures* (ſaith he) *for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which teſtify of me*, John V. 39. And this is not all, but

but he appeals for the truth of his Doctrine, to the Works which he wrought before their eyes. *The works* (ſaith he) *which my Father hath given me to finiſh, the ſame works that I do, bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me*, John V. 36. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him*, John X. 37, 38. *He was* then *a man approved of God among them, by miracles, and wonders, and ſigns, which God did by him in the midſt of them, as they themſelves alſo knew*, Acts II. 22. And after all, he himſelf ſuffered death for the confirmation of his Doctrine, and therefore could have no worldly end in deceiving his Diſciples. But what greater evidence could they, or the World deſire, that he did not deceive them, than this, That as he taught them to underſtand his Doctrine; ſo he gave them power to do the ſame kind of works, as he had done, for the confirmation of it; according to his promiſe, *John* XIV. 12. *He that believeth in me, the works that I do, ſhall he do alſo; and greater works than theſe ſhall he do, becauſe I go to my Father.* They ſaw then what he did, and they felt in themſelves what he had enabled them to do in his Name. Yea, many others ſaw, and felt in themſelves the power

and

and vertue of thoſe works which *they* did. Theſe works were done in the Streets and Market-places; in the Temple, and in the Synagogues; at their ſolemn Feaſts, and in their moſt full Aſſemblies. So that *the people hearing Chriſt, were aſtoniſh'd, ſaying, Whence hath this man theſe things? And what wiſdom is this which is given unto him, that even ſuch mighty works are wrought by his hands?* Mark VI. 2. And the *Prieſts* and *Rulers* of the *Jews*, when they heard *Peter* and *John, and perceived that they were unlearned, and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with* JESUS. And ſeeing a Miracle done by them, they confeſſed it, ſaying, *That indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifeſt to all them that dwell in Jeruſalem, and we cannot deny it*, Acts IV. 13, 16.

Laſtly, Seeing 'tis ſaid, theſe men might be deceived by JESUS, and ſo deceive others; let it be farther conſider'd, What hopes either *He* or *They* could have, that ſuch a Deluſion ſhould prevail. Had they ſuch hope, or had they not? If not, would they ſuffer as they did, and as before-hand they knew they muſt, merely to promote, and carry on a Deluſion which they had no hope would ever ſucceed? Will any one loſe all he has, endure all pains and miſeries, and a cruel death too, only to have

have the ſatisfaction of attempting, what he thinks it in vain to attempt? Had they ſuch hope? And whence had they it? Could they hope that the mighty Princes, and the great Scholars and Wiſe-men of the World could be deluded by them? Could they hope that all, or many, would give ſo much Credit to a few mean and unlearned Men, as for their ſakes to change their Opinions which they had ſuck'd in with their Mother's milk, wherein their Anceſtors had lived and died; yea, and caſt away their *Gods* too, whom they had ſo long worſhip'd, and by whom they thought themſelves protected and made proſperous? They could never dream of ſuch a thing, and 'tis plain that they built not their hope on their own Credit or Reputation: If they had done ſo, they would have ſet themſelves out to the eye of the World in their beſt colours; they would have carefully conceal'd and hid their own Infirmities, and every thing which might leſſen their Reputation among men. But they were very free in laying open to publick view their own Blemiſhes and Failings, their Ignorances and their Sins. And certainly, this is not the cuſtome of Deceivers, or of men that would be believed on the ſtock of their own Reputation. It is therefore plain, That the hope they had of having their Doctrine received,

was

was wholly founded on the Excellence of the Doctrine it ſelf, and on the Power of him from whom they had it. They doubted not therefore to leave it to ſhift for it ſelf, and to be tried by its own apparent goodneſs. They fear'd not, but he who ſent them to preach it, would own it, and give it acceptance where it pleaſed him it ſhould be embraced; and finally recompence them abundantly for all their Sufferings.

Theſe things all conſider'd, no man can have reaſon to doubt of their honeſty. And they being found both *knowing* and *honeſt*, they wanted nothing to qualify them for writing theſe things. And therefore we can have no cauſe to diſtruſt them, telling us that they wrote the *word of GOD*.

3. And now if after all this, we find that theſe mens writings are ſuch, as have all the Characters of Divine Truth, what more can we deſire?

1. The Matters revealed in them, are truly worthy of GOD to reveal, and neceſſary for Man to know.
2. The Manner of their Revelation is ſuch, that the hand of GOD doth viſibly appear in it.

3. The

3. The Succeſs which the Doctrine of theſe Writings hath had, is ſuch, as none but GOD could give it.

In ſum, They are ſuch things, as if there be a GOD, we would judge it moſt fit for him to make known; and ſuch as are made known in ſuch a manner, as we would think it moſt proper for him to reveal them in; and ſuch as have had ſuch ſucceſs, as we would think it well becoming him to give them.

1. The Matters contained in the Holy *Scriptures*, are ſuch things as are truly worthy of GOD, if there be one, to reveal; and neceſſary for us men to know.

1. The Hiſtory of the *Creation* of the World, and of all things in it, and of Man eſpecially; of God's *Univerſal Providence*, and *Government*, and of his *Special Providence* over thoſe that ſerve him; Of his *Judgements* executed on the Wicked, and his ſpecial *Mercies* to, and *Deliverances* wrought for the Righteous; this is certainly apt to beget in us the moſt high thoughts and eſteem of GOD; the greateſt Reverence, and moſt humble Adoration of the *Divine Majeſty*; the moſt free ſubmiſſion, and chearful Reſignation to him, and an entire Dependance on him,

him, as our *Maker*, *Owner*, *Preserver* and *Governor*; on whose *Goodness* and *Favour* depends our Life and Happiness, and whose *Displeasure* and *Wrath* must needs be our Destruction. And can we think it unbecoming GOD to acquaint us with this? or needless for us to know it?

2. To have a true Information of the *Special Goodness* of GOD to us *Men*, even from first to last: Of his Making Man at first in his own *Image*, with an *Immortal Soul*, and a *Beautiful Body*, and his providing all things needful for the good and welfare of both; and his giving him the *Dominion* over, and the free *use* of most other Creatures. How Man fell from this good and honourable State, into all manner of Misery, by disobeying GOD. How the World, the good Work of GOD, became both so wicked, and so full of Troubles and Sorrows. What wise and gracious Methods GOD has used to preserve in all Ages, and in the midst of a world of wickedness, an holy Generation of People for himself; and what wonderful means he hath of his Infinite Goodness through JESUS CHRIST provided for us; whereby, notwithstanding our natural *Corruption* and *Guilt*, we may yet again be restored to his *Favour*, and our *Blessedness*.

3. To

3. To afford us such a sight of GOD's *Nature* and *Attributes* as we are capable of in this life; his *Majesty*, *Immensity*, *Power*, *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, and all things necessary to be understood of him, in order to our *Duty* towards him, and *Happiness* in him. To open unto us those unfathomable *Mysteries*, of the Incomprehensible TRINITY in UNITY, One undivided GOD in the Three distinct *Persons* of FATHER, SON and HOLY GHOST; of the wonderful INCARNATION of the Eternal SON of GOD for the *Redemption* of Sinners; of his *Passion*, *Resurrection*, *Ascension*, *Intercession*, and coming again to *Judgment*. Of the Miraculous sending of the HOLY GHOST, his Inspiring of the *Apostles* with *Gifts* and *Graces* befitting their Office. These, and the like, are such things as men could never attain to the knowledge of, but by Divine Revelation.

4. To give us *Laws* whereby we are to govern our selves, and such Laws as our own *Reason* being made judge, are most *Holy*, and *Just*, and *Good*; all visibly tending to advance among us the Honour and Glory of GOD who gave them, and promote the Happiness of Men to whom they are given; binding us to nothing but to pay unto GOD such a *Homage* and *Duty*, as we must confess we *naturally*

turally owe him, and are by our Nature fitted to pay him; to do our ſelves and others all the good we can, and no hurt at all; and to do every one of us what lies in our power to make this world, whilſt we live in it, a pleaſant, peaceable, and comfortable place of habitation to us.

5. To certifie us, What ſhall become of us, when by *Death* we ſhall go out of this world; what *Rewards* there are for the Good, and what *Puniſhments* for the Wicked: To ſhew us the twofold Eternal Future State of *Happineſs* and *Miſery*; and that our preſent Life is our Time of *Trial* and of *Diſcipline*; and as we behave our ſelves, doth certainly bring us to one of theſe two. To aſſure us, That our *Souls* do never dye, and that our *Bodies* after *Corruption*, ſhall be rais'd again *Incorruptible*: And that we muſt in *Soul* and *Body* be brought to *Judgment*, and by the Laws under which we have lived, be either finally *condemned* or *acquitted*.

Let any one ſay, what things he can ſuppoſe, if there be a GOD, more worthy of *Him* to reveal, or more needful for *us* to know, than ſuch as theſe. Could we be better inſtructed in the Knowledge of either GOD or *our ſelves*? Could we be better directed how to Honour GOD, or to do good to our ſelves? Could we have had any greater

Encouragements to Goodneſs, or any greater *Diſcouragements* to live wickedly? Could we deſire a fairer or more ſatisfactory account of things not otherwiſe knowable, and yet fit to be known by us? Had we not been at an utter loſs, and in a lamentable confuſion about theſe things, had they not been thus revealed to us? Have any of the wiſeſt men in the world been able to give us any rational account, or but indifferent ſatisfaction about the *Original* of the World, or of us Men, or of what ſhall be after *Death*; what we may either fear or hope for? In what a confounded ſtate had we been, and what very *Beaſts* muſt we have lived and died, without ſome knowledge of theſe things? And who could ever have made us know theſe things, but GOD? And can we then any longer think, that theſe things are not moſt worthy of GOD to make known unto men?

2. The manner of *Revelation* is ſuch, that the Hand of GOD doth viſibly appear in it. GOD hath ſpoken unto us in his *Word*, in in as *Viſible* and *Audible*, and every way *convincing* a manner, as we can conceive how, if there be a GOD, he ſhould do. GOD, as was ſaid, is in his Nature *Inviſible*; nor hath he a Voice, as Bodies have, to be heard by; yet hath he been *ſeen* and *heard* ſpeaking unto men, ſo as an *Inviſible* and *Incorporeal*

ral Being or *Spirit* can be ſeen or heard: and ſo as men may know it's He that ſpeaks unto them. For his Word was delivered

1. With many *viſible* and *audible* ſignifications and tokens of his *Preſence*.
2. With *Prophecy*, foretelling things within the compaſs of *His* knowledge only.
3. With *Miracles*, which are the proper works of *Divine Power*.

1. The *Atheiſt* would, for his ſatisfaction, *ſee* and *hear* GOD ſpeak. If it will ſatisfie him, That GOD hath been *ſeen* and *heard* ſpeaking, he hath been *ſeen* and *heard* both, ſo as any one can conceive that he could be *ſeen* and *heard*; that is, in *viſible* and *audible* ſignifications and tokens of his Divine *Preſence*. Thus did GOD call upon, and talk with *Adam* and *Eve* in the Garden of *Eden*, both before and after they had ſinned, *Gen.* II. 15, *&c.* III. 9, *&c.* Thus he appeared and ſpake unto *Abraham*; as *Gen.* XV. 1, *&c.* XVII. 1, *&c.* XVIII. 1, 23, *&c.* Thus did he appear and ſpeak unto *Moſes*, in a Flame of Fire in a Buſh, *Exod.* III. 2. And ſo he did to the *Iſraelites* from the Mount, *in fire and ſmoke, the noiſe of a trumpet, with thundrings and lightnings*, Exod. XIX. 18, 19, 20. I need not ſay how often, and how many ways

GOD hath ſo manifeſted himſelf ſpeaking unto men.

But it may be the *Atheiſt* will ſay, If he himſelf could ſee or hear GOD ſpeaking, he would believe it to be *His* Word which he heard. And truly if he be of this mind, that he will believe nothing but what he himſelf ſees and hears, he is too great a fool to be reaſoned into any thing, and therefore not to be diſcours'd with at all. It has been already ſhew'd, what reaſon we have to believe that theſe men ſpeak *Truth*, who tell us all this of GOD. And if he will not believe upon the beſt evidence that can be given of a thing, tho it was, he cannot believe at all. However, ſuppoſe he ſhould *himſelf* ſee or hear what *Abraham* and *Moſes* heard and ſaw: Or ſuppoſe he ſhould ſee the *Church* fill'd, as the *Tabernacle* and *Temple* of old, with a *Clond* or Smoke; or hear a *Voice* from the *Altar*, as that from between the *Cherubims* over the *Mercy-Seat*; or ſuppoſe he ſhould hear and ſee ſuch a *Voice* and *Glory* as thoſe at the *Baptiſm* of CHRIST, *Luke* III. 22. Or at the *Converſion of St.* Paul, Acts IX. 3, 4. Or at the *Transfiguration* of our Bleſſed *Saviour* on the *Mount*, Matt. 17. 5. Or ſuppoſe he ſhould hear GOD calling upon him, as he did upon *Samuel*, by his name, 1 *Sam.* 3, 4. Would he not (as that Child did before *Eli* bet-

better inſtructed him), think it the voice of ſome other, or account of it but as a *Dream* or a *Fancy*? If he ſay again, He would be ſatisfied thus, and otherwiſe he cannot; then I anſwer, That it is not in the power of man to ſay any thing that may ſatisfie him; and it is much to be fear'd, that GOD will not give him any other ſatisfaction. For is it reaſonable to expect that GOD ſhould, merely to humour every obſtinate Fool, ſhew himſelf every day, or as often as a wicked man pleaſeth, and juſt in ſuch a manner as he would have him; and for no other cauſe, but becauſe he is ſullen and unreaſonable, and will not believe any thing that GOD hath formerly ſaid or done, to ſatisfie him? Why ſhould GOD have ſuch hard meaſure from him, above all others? Will he not believe he hath his Father's *Will* and *Teſtament*, unleſs his Father himſelf, whenever he requires it, come from the dead to tell him ſo? And why muſt GOD, who hath given him his *Will* in writing, ſufficiently atteſted, appear as he pleaſeth, to confirm it anew unto him?

2. Much of the *Word* of GOD has been given unto us by way of *Prophecy*, foretelling things to come, which are within the compaſs of *His* Knowledge only: And the *Prophecies* in the *Scripture* have been notoriouſly and undeniably fulfilled; I mean, ſo many of

them as were to be fulfilled before the days wherein we now live; and if theſe have been ſo fulfilled, we can have no cauſe to doubt, but all the reſt will be ſo too, when the time ſhall come. Now things to come, are acknowledg'd not to be within the compaſs of man's knowledge, eſpecially ſuch as depend not neceſſarily on Natural Cauſes, or are not wont to follow one another in the ordinary courſe and order of Nature. We are all of us very ſure, That *we know not what ſhall be on the morrow*, James IV. 14. *We cannot tell what a day*, (no, not what the next hour or minute) *may bring forth*, Prov. XXVII. 1. Nay, we know not certainly, whether or no there ſhall be another day, or who ſhall live to ſee it, or in what condition it will find us. We are not only ignorant of ſuch future things as are of leaſt concernment to us, which we have little deſire to know, or ſee no reaſon to enquire after; but of the things which we moſt long to know, and would account it a very great ſatisfaction to be aſſured of. We know not whether we ſhall be at eaſe or in pain, ſick or in health, alive or dead, the very next day or hour: We know not whether we ſhall be rich or poor, or have any meat to eat, or be able to eat it, if we have it; ſo uncertain are all future things to us. Yet we are ſure, there have been *Prophecies* of things to come, and very

very true ones too: Men have foretold things many hundreds of years before-hand, which came to paſs in all Circumſtances of *Time*, *Place*, and *Manner*, as they had been foretold. Some indeed have been bold enough to foretel things by human *Art* and *Skill*, but have only befool'd thereby both themſelves, and all that truſted to them. If any of them have ſometimes gueſs'd right, 'twas either, *Firſt*, By *Chance*; as he that gueſſeth a Thouſand times, has ill luck if he gueſs not right once or twice; tho he knows no more when he doth ſo, than when he gueſſeth wrong. Or he ſaves his credit by *Craft* and *Cunning*, as moſt of the old *Oracles*, and our *Aſtrologers*, who utter their *Predictions* in ambiguous Expreſſions, which are capable of a double Senſe and Conſtruction: If things happen as you underſtood their words, they have got Credit without any reaſon for it; and if things fall out otherwiſe than you underſtood them, they can tell you, You were miſtaken in their meaning, and they meant as it hath hapned. 'Tis true alſo, That when men will not hearken to the Truth of GOD, he may give them up to *Deluſion*, and may ſuffer a Deceiver to hit on a Truth, to make way for the belief of a Lye, as a very juſt Puniſhment of an unreaſonable Infidelity. But *they* only, whoſe Knowledg of Things Future, they

themſelves confeſs'd to be of GOD, and not acquired by Human *Art*, and whoſe deſign it was, to draw men off from *Idolatry*, and every evil thing, to the Worſhip and Service of the *True* and *Living God*; have conſtantly, and without failing, foretold things truly; and the *Event* hath always verified their *Predictions*. And who but GOD alone, who governs and diſpoſeth of all things according to his own Eternal Decree and Council, could make them ſo knowing? In the Holy *Scriptures* we have many ſuch *Prophecies*; As concerning the Carrying of the *Jews* Captive into *Babylon* by *Nebuchadnezzar*; their Reſtoration to their own Countrey by *Cyrus*: The Succeſſion of the Four Famous *Monarchies* in *Daniel*: The Coming of our *Lord* JESUS, and his Sufferings: The Final Deſtruction of the *Temple*, and of the whole *Jewiſh* Nation: And theſe things, with many more there foretold, have been undeniably fulfilled. And is not this a demonſtration, that theſe mens *Prophecies* were GOD's own *Word*? *Let them bring forth their ſtrong reaſons* (ſaith GOD by his Prophet) *and ſhew us what ſhall happen*: *Let them ſhew the former things what they be, that we may conſider them*; *or declare us things for to come. Shew us the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods*, Iſa. XLI. 22, 23.

Tell

Tell ye, and bring them near, let them take counſel together. Who hath told it from that time? Have not I the LORD? *And there is no* GOD *elſe beſides me,* Iſa. XLV. 21. *I am* GOD, *and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, ſaying, My Counſel ſhall ſtand, and I will do all my pleaſure,* Iſa. XLVI. 10, 11.

3. This Word hath been deliver'd with *Miracles* to confirm it, which are the Works of *Divine Power* only. We know that it is not in the Power of Man, or of any thing elſe, but of the Great GOD of *Nature*, and LORD of the World, to *alter* any thing in the Courſe of *Nature*; to do things which *exceed* the Power of *Natural* Cauſes, or to make things act quite *contrary* to their *Natures*. When therefore we ſee ſuch things done, we muſt acknowledg a Power above all Natural Power whereby they are done. Yet is it as certain as *Hiſtory* and *Obſervation* can make it, that ſuch things have been done, and by thoſe very men from whom we have what we call the *Word* of GOD.

Indeed, all things in the World, from the greateſt to the leaſt, are truly wonderful to us; as being far above, not only our *Skill* to *imitate*, but alſo our *Reaſon* throughly to *underſtand*; yet we call not all things *Miracles*, Only

Only ſuch things as *rarely* happen, and not according to the *ordinary* courſe of Nature, are accounted Miracles. As when the *Fire* refuſeth to burn thoſe that are caſt into it; when the *Water* divides it ſelf, and ſtands up like two walls on each hand, to let men paſs through it on dry ground; when the *Sun* ſtands ſtill in Heaven, and doubles the length of the day; When men without any *Medicinal* Art or help, by a *touch* or a *word* only, either take away, or reſtore *ſight*, *hearing*, *health* and *ſtrength*; diſpoſſeſs *Devils*, command *Winds* and *Seas*, take *life* from the *living*, and give *life* to the *dead*. Theſe things *above* the power, and *contrary* to the courſe of Nature, are *Miracles*. And theſe, with others many, have been done. Not indeed *every day*, and *ordinarily*; for then would they have been diſregarded as *common* things, and ceaſe to be *Wonders*. Not *ſecretly* neither, nor in ſome cloſe *corners* only; for then few could have *witneſſed*, and fewer would have *believed* them. Neither yet were they done upon any *ſlight* or *trivial* occaſion; for then would they have been look'd on only as *Caſualties* and odd *Chances*. But they were done *rarely*, to encreaſe the *wonder*; yet *openly*, to gain *belief*; and upon *ſpecial* and *weighty* Occaſions, that the *Cauſe* might be more noted. *They* who did them, own'd that

that it was GOD who *extraordinarily* enabled them, and that not for *their* ſakes; but for his *own Glory*, and in confirmation of the *truth* of what he had ſent them to teach. In a word, all was to make GOD known unto men, and to perſuade men to ſeek their happineſs in him. By ſuch Works did GOD bear witneſs to his own *Word*. And every one but a Fool will ſay, *Bleſſed be the* LORD *GOD of Iſrael, who only doth wondrous things*, Pſal. LXXII. 18. *Thou art great, and doſt wondrous things; thou art* GOD *alone*, Pſal. LXXXVI. 10. *Underſtand ye brutiſh among the people, and ye fools, when will ye be wiſe?* Pſal. XCIV. 8. *Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things, even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the* LORD, Pſal. CVII. 43.

3. The *Succeſs* which the *Doctrine* contain'd in the holy SCRIPTURE hath had, has been ſuch, as none but GOD alone could give it. If the Men, who wrote theſe Books we ſpeak of, had not given great ſatisfaction to the World, that they ſpake from GOD; how came the *Doctrine* which they taught, to gain *belief?* How came it ſo to take root, and grow, and ſpread, as it hath undeniably done? Why have not its Enemies, the *Wiſe-men* of this World, after ſo much ſtraining of their Wits, and uſing all their *Art* and

Policy

Policy to that end, been yet able to convince men of its *ſolly*, *vanity* or *falſhood?* Why have not all the Mighty *Powers* on Earth, bending their whole force againſt it, been able to ſuppreſs and ſtifle it? Whatever Stratagems the *Devil* or *Man* could invent, have been made uſe of to this purpoſe. *Jews* and *Gentiles* conſpired together to cruſh it in the Egg. *The Heathen raged, and the people imagined a vain thing. The Kings of the earth ſet themſelves, and the Rulers took counſel together, againſt the* LORD, *and againſt his Anointed; ſaying, Let us break their bands aſunder, and caſt away their cords from us.* As *David* propheſied of them, *Pſal.* II. 1, 2, 3. The *Kings* of the Earth have perſecuted this *Religion* with *Fire* and *Sword.* The *Luſts* of mens hearts riſe up in open war againſt it continually. Yet hath it taken root and flouriſh'd; it has conquer'd, and made the moſt wonderful change imaginable in mens hearts and lives. This ſucceſs it has had, not among a few *ſimple* ones, eaſily deceived; but among the moſt *learned*, and *underſtanding*, and *judicious*. And what can this be imputed to, but to the *light* and *power* of Divine Truth? Indeed by its own light men may eaſily ſee all things in it, which can be proper to commend it to all who think fit to be govern'd by Reaſon, as all but *Fools* do.

If

If it be ſaid, That *Idolatry* is yet reigning over the greateſt part of the World; and the fooliſh Religion of *Mahomet* hath had very wonderful Succeſs, and hath triumph'd over, and quite extinguiſhed *Chriſtianity* in many places; ſo that the leaſt part of the World is at this day *Chriſtian*; And therefore the *Chriſtian Doctrine* gains little credit by its *ſucceſs* in the World. In anſwer to this, we ſay theſe things.

Firſt, Whichſoever of theſe Religions, *Heatheniſm*, *Mahometiſm*, or *Chriſtianity*, prevail moſt, or be thought trueſt; yet is it true ſtill, That all the World is of ſome *Religion*, and owns a GOD. And therefore this is no Objection againſt what we at firſt undertook to prove, *That there is a GOD*; Only it may ſeem to weaken one of our *Arguments*, whereby we would prove this. But indeed it doth not weaken it at all.

For *ſecondly*, We are now only proving, that our *Scripture* is the *Word* of GOD; and this is but one of the many *Arguments* we uſe to that end; and the reſt are convincive enough without it. So that ſhould this Argument fail us, yet our whole Argument, whereby we would, from our having the *Word* of GOD, prove that there is a GOD, ſtands good. But nether doth our argument fail us,

us, but proves what we would prove by it.

For *thirdly*, We ſay not, that the *Chriſtian* Doctrine is receiv'd by *all* men, or by *moſt* men, or by *more* than they who are of other Religions. All we ſay is this, It was in a very *ſhort* time received in *moſt* parts of the then *known* World; though for the ſins of them who profeſs'd it, GOD hath ſuffer'd it in many places to be rooted out again. Nor doth this leſſen its *Credit*, but rather confirms its *truth*. For this is the ſame which it ſelf foretold, and ſhews the care that GOD takes of it; who as he will not ſuffer it to be quite loſt, ſo neither will he always afford it them who abuſe it. Thus was it foretold to the Church of *Epheſus*, Rev. II. 5. *I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy Candleſtick out of its place, except thou repent.* And thus it happen'd to that and other Churches. Accordingly as our Bleſſed JESUS had told the *Jews*, Matth. XXI. 43. *The Kingdom of GOD ſhall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruit thereof.* Though therefore *Heatheniſm* or *Mahometiſm* fill more of the World than *Chriſtianity*, yet hath the *Chriſtian* Doctrine had the *ſucceſs* which we ſpeak of.

Fourthly, Though at this day it prevails not over *moſt* of the World, yet it flouriſheth

in the moſt *Civilized* and *Learned* parts of it. Whereas *Idolatry* and *Mahometiſm* prevail only among the more *rude*, *illiterate*, *barbarous* and *brutiſh* ſort of People.

Beſide this, *Fifthly*, it hath had the *ſucceſs* we ſpeak of, by *fair*, *rational* and *indearing* Methods, by gentle *Perſuaſions*, and convincing *Reaſons*; by its own viſible *purity* and *goodneſs*; by the power of *Miracles*; without any uſe of *force* or *violence*: But other Religions prevail only upon the account of *Education*, and *Cuſtom*, and an *Affectation* of treading in the ſteps of *Forefathers*; or elſe by *Violence* and *Compulſion*, *Fire* and *Sword*.

Again *Sixthly*, Other Religions are upheld, by keeping men in *ignorance*, and depriving them of the means of *knowledge*. And it is no wonder that the greateſt part of the World is ſtill in *error*, when the *light* of *truth* is ſhut out from it. They can *chuſe* no better, who are ſuffer'd to *know* no better. But the *Chriſtian* Religion ſeeks not for the advantage of mens *blindneſs*, and being in the dark. 'Twas ſent *To open mens eyes, and to turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto GOD*, Acts XXVI. 18. It chargeth all it meets with, to *Prove all things, and hold faſt that which is good*, 1 Theſſ. V. 21. If it prevail among men, 'tis by *reaſon*, and *light*, and *knowledge*. Men chuſe other

other Religions as blind-men do beauties, by *chance*. And ſo the moſt deformed is all one with the moſt handſome: But *Chriſtians* chuſe by *ſight* and *judgment*.

Laſtly, Other Religions do favour and flatter men's *Corruptions*, and humor *fleſh* and *blood*. But the *Chriſtian* Religion proclaims open war againſt theſe; croſſeth mens corrupt Inclinations, contradicts their natural Humors, commands them to deny themſelves, and their own Wills, mortifies their darling Luſts, crucifies the Fleſh, deſtroys Selfiſhneſs, commends patience, lays the Croſs in their way and injoins them to bear it in hope of things not yet ſeen, and far off. That other Religions prevail, what wonder is it? Neither can it be any argument that they are of GOD. Men can eaſily invent, and are ready to embrace, and will be very fond of, and not eaſily change a Religion that indulgeth their *Luſts*. But that *Chriſtianity*, commanding men to offer violence to themſelves, and to part freely with what they love beſt, ſhould be receiv'd by any conſiderable number of men, is very wonderful indeed, and ſhews it to be of GOD. The power of *Luſt* and *Corruption* is enough to make men embrace other Religions; but the Power of GOD only, and of *ſupernatural* Grace, could prevail with men to accept of *this*.

I have

I have now done with the *firſt* Argument, to prove it reaſonable to believe, that *there is a* GOD; and have ſhewn, that if the *Atheiſt* would have GOD ſhew himſelf to be, by ſome ſuch *viſible* and *audible* ſignifications and tokens of his being, as we are capable of perceiving him by, he has all the reaſon that can be to believe that he hath done ſo. And I have inſiſted the longer upon this Point, that in ſhewing the *folly* of the *Atheiſt*, I might at once ſhew the *folly* of the *Antiſcripturiſt*; and that he is as well a *Fool* who denies the *Scripture* to be the *Word* of GOD, as he that ſays, *There is no* GOD.

II. If this kind of *manifeſtation* of himſelf, which GOD hath given us in his *Word*, will not ſuffice; how elſe would the *Atheiſt* have him to manifeſt himſelf for his ſatisfaction? Will he be ſatisfied, if it be ſhew'd him, That GOD hath imprinted ſuch a ſenſe of his being in mens minds, that they are not only capable of perceiving, but generally inclined to acknowledge this truth? I am now to ſhew him, that GOD hath done this, and that Mankind hath generally been very ſenſible that there is a GOD.

Indeed we have the Teſtimony of *Angels* and *Men* to aſſure us of this; and one would think this ſhould be enough; for when every

thing that hath reaſon, bears witneſs of a thing, he that yet disbelieves it, muſt confeſs that he doth ſo againſt all the Reaſon in the World; and he that contradicts all Reaſon, muſt needs be a *Fool*.

As for the Teſtimony of *Angels*, 'tis in vain to trouble the *Atheiſt* with it; for *Angels* are *inviſible Spirits*; and for the ſame reaſon that he denies there is a GOD, he will alſo deny that there are any inviſible *Spirits*; ſeeing theſe can no otherwiſe appear, or manifeſt themſelves unto men, than we have already ſhew'd that GOD hath done. Who therefore it be as evident, as it can be made, that there are ſuch *Spirits*, both good and bad, and that they have frequently born witneſs of GOD; yet ſeeing it is but the ſame kind of Evidence, with what we have ſpoken of already, I ſhall not at all inſiſt upon it now, but only on that which we have from the general *conſent* of *Mankind*.

Now this *Teſtimony* of men for the being of a GOD, is not to be ſlightly regarded; it having all the *Advantage* that *Humane Teſtimony* can have. It is not the Teſtimony of ſome *few* men, but of *Mankind* generally. It is not the witneſs of *all* men in ſome *one* or *two Ages* of the World, or of ſome whole *Nations* only; but of *all Nations*, and of *all Ages* and *Generations*, ſince there have been any men,

men, whom we could hear of, in the World.

Must it not be a very fooliſh thing in any man, to make himſelf confident of a thing, whereof *firſt* he can have no degree of aſſurance; and *ſecondly*, whereof the generality of men think themſelves very ſure? There can hardly be a clearer evidence of one's being a *Fool*, than this, That he takes himſelf to be *wiſer* than all the World beſides; and that too in holding an Opinion, wherein he cannot pretend to any *evidence* at all to ground it upon. Let us therefore here conſider theſe things.

1. There has not been, at any *time*, in any *place*, any *People*, diſcover'd upon the face of the whole Earth, that hath not own'd a GOD. The moſt *barbarous*, *wild*, and even *brutiſh* People, without any kind of *Learning*, or common *Civility*, in their Manners hardly diſtinguiſhable from the Beaſts of the Field by any thing elſe but this, have been found to have ſome ſort of *Religious Worſhip* among them. Though many of them have had no knowledge of the *true* and *living* GOD, for want of inſtruction; yet would they rather fall down, and worſhip any thing, either in *Heaven*, or upon *Earth*, yea the very *Devils* themſelvs, than nothing at all. So deeply is this

truth, that *there is a* GOD, ingraven, as it were in the very *Nature* of *Mankind*, that nothing could ever yet eraze, or wear it quite out. Even that groſs *Idolatry* which reigns over ſo great a part of the World, is enough to ſhame the *Atheiſt*; for thereby is it manifeſt, that the World hath never counted any thing more abſurd and fooliſh, than to think that *there is no* GOD. Men not knowing who is the *true* GOD, were yet ſo fully convinced that there muſt be *ſome* GOD; that they would worſhip any thing, that they thought could do them either good or hurt, rather than nothing at all.

And as this was the belief of *all* in general; ſo look by how much any Nation was more *civilized* and cultivated by good *Literature*; o much the more care there was taken about *Religion*, as among the *Egyptians*, *Greeks* and *Romans*. And ſuch *Perſons* as had the beſt opportunities, and greateſt abilities, for the ſearch and diſcovery of Truth, were abundantly ſatisfied themſelves, and took pains to ſatisfy others in the reaſonableneſs of this belief. And *laſtly*, they above others, who with good reaſon were eſteem d the *beſt* of men; I mean ſuch as endeavour'd to do the World moſt good; who lived virtuouſly, and juſtly, and did what they could to make men the better, and the happier for them; were always

ways the moſt zealous and earneſt Promoters and Maintainers of this belief. When therefore 'tis apparent, that Mankind *generally*, and more *eſpecially*, the *Learnedſt*, the *Wiſeſt*, and the *beſt* of men have always believed this; doth not the *Atheiſt* ſhew himſelf a *Fool* in contradicting all men; having no better Reaſon for his Opinion, than only his own *Imagination?*

If any ſhall object, That it is upon Record, that there have been ſome *Atheiſts* in the World, and therefore 'tis not true, that we have the *Univerſal* Conſent of Mankind. The Anſwer to this Objection is very eaſie.

1. Many of them who were call'd *Atheiſts*, were not ſo indeed; but the moſt *Religious* Perſons of their time. It was not becauſe they denied that there is a GOD, but becauſe they denied thoſe *Idols*, which the Heathens worſhipped, to be Gods indeed, that thoſe blinded *Idolaters* called them *Atheiſts*. And upon this account it was, that the Primitive *Chriſtians* of old were by thoſe *Idolaters* charg'd with *Atheiſm*.

2. Suppoſe ſome *few* have denied that there is a GOD; yet were they ſo few, and inconſiderable, in compariſon of the reſt who own'd a GOD, that they ought not to be once named in oppoſition to a general Con-

ſent. If, I ſay, The generality of Mankind have Eyes and Sight, is it reaſonable to ſay, it is not true, becauſe an odd man here or there is born blind? If, I ſay, Men are Rational Creatures; will any think it a ſufficient confutation of this, that he can ſhew me now and then a natural Fool? With as little reaſon, when I ſay, Men generally own a GOD, can any one object, it is not true; becauſe he can name one or two odd men, in ſo many Millions, that have been ſo blind and fooliſh, as not to ſee and know, what all others ſee and know.

3. Theſe few that have denied a GOD, had not been taken ſo much notice of, had they not been *very few* indeed; and for their *rarity* it is, that they were then *wonder'd* at, and ſince are *recorded* in Hiſtory. But as they were noted for the *ſingularity* of their Opinion, ſo were they *hated* for their *wickedneſs*, branded as *infamous*, and as *Enemies* of Mankind. The World was weary of them; and as ſoon as any one began to be ſuſpected to be of this Opinion, his *Citizens* baniſh'd him out of their Society, as one unfit to live among Mankind. Which is an Argument, that it is ſo natural to men to own a GOD, that he who do h not ſo, has ever been look'd on as a *M nſter* or ſ mething that deſerves not to be reckon'd among *men*.

4. Theſe

4. Theſe very few, how confident ſoever, could never produce any conſiderable *reaſons* for their opinion; and to talk confidently without reaſon, is but to rave like one in a high Feaver, and not worthy to be heeded. Now the *Athieſt* hath ſo little to ſay for himſelf, that he has not been able to make many believe, That ever he believed himſelf in this point; inſomuch that it is at this day a great *Queſtion* diſputed among Learned Men, whether there can be ſuch a thing as an *Atheiſt in Judgment*. It can hardly be ſaid in propriety of ſpeech, that a man believes what he can ſhew no reaſon for believing: And therefore whilſt the *Atheiſt* can give no reaſon for what he ſaith, ſaying, There is no GOD; we may ſay, *He doth not believe there is a GOD*; but it ſeems we cannot ſay, *He believes there is none*. And the main Reaſon of his *Unbelief*, (for it is no more) when well ſearch'd into, will be found no other, but that very ſame upon which there are too many *Unbelievers* now. The love of Wickedneſs makes the thoughts of a GOD very uneaſie to men, and they are very unwilling to entertain a Belief that will not ſuffer them to fulfil their Luſts with Peace of Mind.

5. *Laſtly*, Remember, That as we have read and heard of ſome *Atheiſts*; ſo alſo have we read or heard this alſo of them; That for

all the ſhifts they could make, they could not ſo fully ſatisfie themſelves, as to quiet their own *Conſciences.* Bluſter indeed they would, and make a noiſe in the day-time, as if they fear'd nothing: Buſineſs and Company diverted them from talking much with themſelves, or entring upon ſerious thoughts: But when night came, and ſilence was made; when they were alone and at leiſure, and had nothing to do but to think; whenever their thoughts were fixt on this ſubject, their fears alſo came along with them, and they could not ſo eaſily as they deſired, get quit of that GOD, whom they uſed ſo confidently to defie. Indeed there are too many who take a too effectual courſe to prevent this trouble; they are very careful to keep their heads day and night ſo full of the world, and of their Luſts and Vanities, that the thoughts of GOD can find no room: And thus they conſtantly buſie their minds, till ſleep arreſts them. But take any thinking man, that concerns himſelf at all about GOD, and a future State, who is willing ſometimes to think what he is, whence he came, and whither he ſhall go when he dies; and he ſhall never be able to ſatisfie himſelf ſo fully, that there is no GOD, but he will find himſelf ſometimes afraid that there is; and more eſpecially, when he thinks himſelf near dying, or in

any

any great danger. The Bloody Emperor, that would own no GOD but himself, would, when it Thundred, run under his bed to hide himself. And one that denied a GOD all his life long, grew very sad upon his death-bed; and being ask'd by them who heard his sighs, If he believed there is a GOD, and if it was that which made him sigh? No, (saith he) I do not believe it, only I am thinking in what a sad condition I shall presently be, if there be one, as I know not but there is. And possibly we may have heard of one, too well known of many, of whom 'tis said, that notwithstanding his many boasts and great confidence, he durst never be alone in the dark, or go to sleep without a candle lighted up by him.

Lay this together, and then say, if he be not a *Fool*, who contrary to the general Sense and Reason of Mankind, will needs be confident that there is no GOD? Is not he a Fool, who dares conclude, That (except himself, and it may be two or three more just like himself whom the world, of all others, could best spare, and whom it could heartily wish to be rid of), all men in the world have been either *Knaves* in making, or *Fools* in believing a *Lye*?

2. But this Argument from the general sense of Mankind, is yet capable of a farther im-

improvement. For it is to be conſider'd *How*, and upon what account, the whole World ſhould in this one point come to be of the ſame belief.

It is not an ordinary thing, to find great multitudes of people, all of *One* mind, about matters of *great* and *near* concernment, if they be not very obvious and plain either to *Senſe* or *Reaſon*. Men ſtand divided into contrary Opinions about many things, and eſpecially about matters of *Religion*, and the ſeveral ways of *Religious Worſhip*; and are as contrary to one another, as Light and Darkneſs, even in their choice of the *gods* whom they worſhip. How is it then, that they all ſo unanimouſly conſent in this *Firſt Principle* of Religion, That there is a GOD to be worſhipped? This is not a thing obvious to *Senſe*. It is not ſtrange, that all ſhould agree, That there is a *Sun* in the Heavens, giving light to the world, becauſe they *ſee* it. But they ſee not GOD. How then are they all agreed in this too, That there is a GOD, unleſs this be as obvious to *Reaſon*, as the other is to Senſe? And if it be ſo, he that denies it, muſt be a *Fool*, for denying what is obvious to the *Reaſon* of *Mankind*.

I can think of no more but two ways, whereby men ſhould be brought univerſally to conſent in a thing of ſo weighty concern-

ment,

ment, which is not obvious to their ſenſes: Either, *Firſt*, The Being of a GOD is a thing ſo imprinted in *Nature*, that the *Reaſon* of man cannot be awake, and conſider things, but it muſt needs perceive it. Or, *Secondly*, Men have been taught it at firſt, and have ſucceſſively taught it to one another, from the beginning. And take which we will of theſe, and it will be found a moſt *reaſonable* thing to believe it.

Firſt, If this be a Truth imprinted in *Nature*, ſo that it cannot be worn out by time, and become inviſible, but ſo ſoon as men arrive at the uſe of Reaſon, and make uſe of it as they ought, they cannot but ſee it; Then whoſoever ſaith, That there is no GOD, muſt needs be a *Fool*. For he muſt needs be a *Fool*, who perſuades, or endeavours to perſuade himſelf, a thing is not, which it is *Natural* to him to diſcern, and which he can no ſooner open, and uſe as he ought, the Eye of his *Soul* to look after, but he muſt needs ſee it. If then it be *Natural* to men, by the uſe of *Reaſon* to diſcern the Being of a GOD; and if this be the reaſon why men generally (notwithſtanding all their other diſagreements) are agreed in this Belief; then is it both *Reaſonable* and *Natural* for men to believe it; and if any one believes it not, it is becauſe

becauſe he is not a *Perfect Man*, but is defective in ſome Faculty *eſſential* to Mankind: It muſt be either becauſe he wants the uſe of Reaſon, or becauſe he will not uſe it; and whichſoever it be, no man can deny him to be a *Fool*: For what is it elſe to be a *Fool*, but either to *want* the common uſe of Reaſon, or to make no good uſe of it?

Secondly, If men have been at firſt taught this, and ſo have taught it one another ſucceſſively throughout all generations, to this day; and thus it hath been univerſally received as a Truth by *Inſtruction*, and uninterrupted *Tradition*, throughout all Ages and Parts of the World; This muſt alſo be accounted a very good reaſon to believe it true, and that it could come *originally* from no other but GOD himſelf.

Yet here the *Atheiſt* will needs imagine, that he has gain'd a conſiderable advantage. Some cunning men, (ſaith he) for ends of their own which they would ſerve by it, ſet abroach this Opinion; and moſt men, ſeeing how uſeful it proved for the preſervation of Order and good Government, eaſily entertained it; and *Rulers*, finding the advantage of it to themſelves, have done all they could to countenance it, and have puniſhed all that queſtion'd it: And thus, tho

but

but a *Politick Invention* at firſt, it hath prevail'd at length, as a *certain Truth.*

Now if we had no other Reaſons but mere *Tradition* for the Belief of a GOD, I confeſs what is here ſaid, might ſeem more *plauſible*; and yet, when well conſider'd, not very *credible.* However, it is no more, but one of the Fool's *May-be*'s, on which he is content to venture his *Soul*, and all his *Happineſs*, and I think him no leſs a *Fool* for that: He imagines, it may be thus; but dare he ſay, He knows it is thus indeed? No; but he is ſo afraid of all thoughts of a GOD, that he is willing to have any thing thought true, rather than that it ſhould be thought that there is a GOD, to whom he muſt give an account of himſelf. It is certain, that the world generally has believed, there is a GOD, the *Atheiſt* cannot deny that: And we all know by experience, That all men are not very apt, in matters of ſo weighty concernment, to be of one opinion, where the thing is not very obvious to Senſe or Reaſon. The *Atheiſt* knows this too: And yet rather than it ſhall be thought, that it is ſo agreeable to *Reaſon*, that men cannot but generally conſent in it, without ſeeming enemies to Reaſon; the *Atheiſt* will again ſet his *Fancy* a-work, to imagine what elſe *may be.* And what has he now hit upon? Why, It may be the whole

World

World has been always *deceiv'd* by ſomebody, he knows not by whom, into the belief of a GOD. It is an endleſs thing to anſwer *Dreams*, a Sick-man's *Ravings*, or a Fool's *Fancies*. However, let it be conſidered,

1. What is already ſaid, That the *Atheiſt* cannot pretend to know what he ſaith, to be true; but ſaith only, It may be ſo for ought he knows. And then for us to ſay, It may not be ſo, for ought he knows, is anſwer enough to all he has ſaid, and to prove him a *Fool* too for ſaying it: For if it either may be, or may not be ſo for ought he knows, he's a Fool for venturing his Soul upon its being ſo. The World is now ſome Hundreds above Five Thouſand Years old, and no man in this long tract of time could ever yet diſcover this Forgery here imagined: No man could ever find out who it was that firſt ſet abroach this Opinion; or in what Age or Part of the World it firſt began; or indeed where at any time it was not, or that ever there was a time when it was not the Univerſal Opinion of Mankind. It is as old, as is the memory of Man upon the Earth; for the very firſt Man that has been heard of in the World, was of this opinion. And whatever *Hiſtory* gives us any account of *Men*, ſince the appearance of the

Firſt

Firſt man, aſſures us withal, That thoſe men did own a GOD. Yea, we find not only that it was ever the opinion of the anciently-known Parts of the World, but alſo of thoſe very lately-diſcover'd parts of it, which have had for many Thouſands of Years, (as far as we can underſtand) no manner of Correſpondence with the reſt of Mankind. So that if this Opinion was propagated both to them and us by *Tradition*, then This *Tradition* can hardly have any later date, than that of the *Univerſal Flood* in the days of *Noah*, about Four thouſand Years ago.

2. Think therefore, if it be not much more likely, That this Belief was at firſt taught the World by GOD himſelf, than by any ſuch Cunning man as the *Atheiſt* dreams of. It began in the very firſt man that we have had any notice of; it hath continued ever ſince, through all Generations of men that we have heard of in all parts of the world: And is it not then moſt likely, that it was taught the Firſt man by GOD himſelf? There is no difficulty in conceiving this, and we have as good evidence as we can deſire, that it was ſo indeed. But we have no manner of Evidence at all, that it was an *Invention* of ſome later man, nor is it eaſily conceivable how it ſhould be ſo. For,

3. It

3. It is not eaſie to imagine, how that man (whoever the *Ath iſt* would have him to be) ſhould perſuade all thoſe who had always lived without any thoughts of a GOD, ſo generally to believe him. He, or a few more with him, could not be of Power enough to compel all men by force into this belief. *Force* indeed may compel men to make a *ſhew* of believing what they believe not; but to believe indeed, what men can ſee no reaſon for believing, no *Force* in the world can compel men: But that men ſhould univerſally be compelled, ſo much as to make a *ſhew* of believing what they believed not, by the power of ſome *one*, or a *few* men, is a thing altogether incredible. If then (as the *Atheiſt* would have it) any *one*, or ſome *few* men, did at firſt perſuade the world into this belief, which it had not before, and which, conſidering the corruption of men, we may be ſure it had no mind to entertain; he muſt needs do it by making the thing propounded to their belief, appear to them very reaſonable. For,

Firſt, Tho ſome *ſilly* and *unconſidering* people might eaſily be deceived by men of *craft* and *Subtilt*, yet we cannot ſuppoſe all men to have been ſo ſimple and inconſiderate. And 'tis well known, that the moſt *Knowing*, *Learned*, and *Wiſe*, have ever been of this belief; and

and therefore it muſt be *Reaſon* that could perſuade them to it.

Secondly, Tho the men of ſome *one Age* had been ſo ſimple, as to be impoſed upon by a *Fallacy* or Deceit, yet had no age after it the Wit to find it out? Why could no Witty *Atheiſt*, with all his ſtock of *Reaſon* and *Learning*, which he is wont to brag on, diſcover the *Fallacy*, and undeceive the world again? Certainly there have been in ſome Ages of the world, ſince this Opinion firſt came in, men of good *Senſe*, and a competent *Underſtanding* to know *Reaſon* when they hear it: Why then has no *Atheiſt* all this while, by his better Reaſons, convinced at leaſt the more *Underſtanding* part of mankind, of this Error which he ſuppoſeth them to have been led into?

Thirdly, Men are generally ſo much in love with wickedneſs, that, *Firſt*, They muſt have been very *Weighty Reaſons* that could perſuade any conſiderable number to believe a GOD: And *Secondly*, Very *Weak Reaſons*, could they but find any at all, may ſeem enough to perſuade them, There is no GOD.

There is nothing in the world more unwelcome to a wicked man, than any talk of a GOD. To be bid to believe that there is one by whoſe holy and ſtrict Laws he is to be ruled in all his thoughts, words, and deeds;

one who is every where preſent with him, obſerving his whole behaviour, and keeping an exact Regiſter of all his ſins; one who will call him to an account, and will puniſh him for all his wickedneſs; this goes exceedingly againſt the hair: 'Tis this that fills his Soul with fears; and troubles his mind with ſad thoughts; and marrs his frothy mirth, and ſpoils his ſinful pleaſures, and affrights him from his wicked deſigns, and will not let him quietly have his own will, nor allow him to humour himſelf, and make much of his fleſh. This bridles his appetite, reſtrains his luſts, croſſes his natural inclinations, lays a bar in the way of his worldly intereſts, cuts him ſhort in his deſired liberties: And becauſe of all this, he would be glad in his heart that any one could aſſure him, That there is no GOD. Hence it appears, That the *Atheiſt* hath all the advantages on his ſide, that he can deſire, to enable him to convince men of this Error, if it be one. By reaſon of their corruption, men are very ready to hearken to him, and deſire nothing more, than to hear him prove what he ſays; yea, they would reward him at any rate for his pains. It's a very eaſie thing to perſuade men unto what they love; and a weak argument is ſtrong enough to make men believe what they would fain believe: Why then is the wicked man's good

good friend the *Atheist* so sparing of his *Reasons*, when he may so fairly hope to convince men by them? The truth is, by all this it plainly appears, both that they are very *strong Reasons*, that prevail with men against their own corrupt inclinations, to believe a GOD; and that the *Atheist* has *no Reason* at all on his side, seeing he is not able to convince men, who fain would have it so, That there is no GOD.

Fourthly, What end had this *Imaginary* man, which the *Atheist* talks of, in putting this Opinion of a GOD, into mens heads? It was (saith he) to make men more tame, and to bring them under *Government* and *Laws*. And 'tis very true, that men may easily be made sensible, that without *Government* and *Laws*, we should all be like so many wild beasts of prey, tearing and devouring one another; and that nothing can make men more governable, than the belief of a GOD. But after all this, what does that which the *Atheist* saith, amount to? This we will readily grant him,

1. That considering the general wickedness of mankind, Government and severe Laws are very necessary things.

2. That the belief of a GOD, is that which, above all other things, will soonest bring men to submit to Government.

3. That if the belief of a GOD, were an invention of man, it were a very proper invention for the making men more governable.

But now the thing which we would hear proved, is, That the belief of a GOD is but an invention of man for that end. Government, indeed, will never be upheld in the world, without this belief, and therefore this belief is neceſſary to uphold Government: But will it now follow from hence, That this belief is only a device of man, to uphold Government? No certainly; but this follows (which the *Atheiſt* has no mind to hear of), That he who thinks there is no GOD, is an Enemy to Government, and ought not to have the Protection of Government, nor to enjoy the Privileges of a Subject; but ought to be baniſh'd from all Societies of men, as the greateſt enemy to them in the world.

And now, ſeeing it is granted by the *Atheiſt*, That this belief is ſo neceſſary for the maintaining of *Civil Government* in the world; I will be bold hence to infer a Concluſion quite contrary to his, *viz.* That it is the more likely for that to be true, and to come from GOD, and not to be an invention of man. And the reaſonableneſs of this Inference will thus appear:

1. *Go-*

1. *Government* and *Laws* are on purpoſe to tie men up to live by *Rule*, to reſtrain them within the bounds of *Juſtice* and *Sobriety*; to keep them from taking the liberty they would otherwiſe take, and from having their own wills in every thing that they may have a longing mind unto. Now that which could perſuade men to be thus *tied up* and *reſtrain'd*, muſt needs appear to them very *reaſonable* in it ſelf, otherwiſe they would never be brought to thruſt their Necks into a *Yoke* for the ſake of ſomething, which they ſaw not before-hand good *reaſon* to believe. If the *Atheiſt* ſay, That though they ſaw no reaſon before-hand to believe that there is a GOD, yet the benefit of good *Government*, and the deſire of *ſafety*, which they could not have without *Government*, was enough to make them content, whether they believed it or no, that it ſhould paſs for a truth. In ſaying this, he confutes himſelf; for if the deſire of *ſafety*, not to be had without *Government*, was it that perſuaded them to admit this opinion of a GOD, true or falſe; and merely for the ſake of *Government*, becauſe without it they could not be *ſafe*: Then did their own *ſafety* ſufficiently convince them of the neceſſity of *Government*, and was enough to perſuade them to admit of it without the belief of a GOD. And ſo the *A-*

theiſt's Politician was only a *Politick Would-be*, and would ſeem wiſe in inventing a thing there was no need of; for 'tis plain, that the belief of a GOD was not neceſſary in order to *Government*, if the deſire of *ſafety* was enough to perſuade men to it. But this very pretence of the *Atheiſt*, That the Opinion of a GOD was ſet on foot to uphold *Government*, is a confeſſion, that all other motives to ſubjection without this belief, are inſufficient; and ſeeing this belief is the principal motive to admit of *Government*, men muſt needs before-hand ſee good *reaſon* for it, for otherwiſe it could be no *motive* at all.

2. If the belief of a GOD be the principal thing that holds men in ſubjection to *Civil Government*, and within the bounds of *Juſtice* and *Sobriety*, then if it be not a *true* belief, it muſt be granted, That a *Lie* is the very foundation of all *Vertue* and *Goodneſs*, *Peace* and *Order*, *Juſtice* and *Honeſty*, *Fidelity* and *Safety* among men; and it is for the great good of the whole World, and ſo the duty of all men to *believe a Lie*; And that there is nothing ſo *wicked*, becauſe nothing can be ſo *dangerous*, *miſchievous* and *pernicious* to Mankind, as *to believe the Truth*. It is a *truth* (ſaith the *Atheiſt*) that there is no GOD. Then is *truth*, and the *belief* of it, the

the fountain of all *evil* and *miſchief*, *diſorder* and *confuſion*. 'Tis a *Lie* (ſaith he again) to ſay, there is a GOD. Then a *Lie*, and the *belief* of it, is the fountain of all *Goodneſs* and *Vertue*, and of all the *happineſs* too in the World. Can any one but a *Fool* believe this? And yet he muſt believe it, that believes the *Atheiſt* ſaying, That the belief of a GOD is only an *invention* of man to keep the World in good order.

This is enough to be ſaid of our *Second Argument* to demonſtrate the *Atheiſt*'s folly, taken from the *general Conſent* of Mankind. And ſurely, he can hardly be thought a *Wiſeman* himſelf, who ventures to call that man *wiſe*, whom the whole World, as we have ſeen, calls a *Fool*.

III. I come to the *Third Argument* grounded on the *Works* of GOD: And this I may call the *Teſtimony of the whole Creation*, of all things animate and inanimate. If there are ſuch *Works*, as are the viſible *Effects* of an *Eternal Being*, of *Infinite Power*, *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, there muſt needs be a GOD; and he muſt be a *Fool* that ſaith, there is none. And here again we have a far more *likely* cauſe of the Univerſal Conſent of Mankind in this belief, than that which the *Atheiſt* imagined as *poſſible* only. By the *Effect* the

Cauſe is known. If we ſee things *made*, we know they had a *Maker*. Men generally have ſeen ſuch things in the World, as they could not conceive to be the Effects of any leſs Power than GODs, and therefore they very rationally concluded, that there is a GOD. And this is the Argument which St. *Paul* hath taught us, *Rom.* I. 19, 20. *That which may be known of GOD is manifeſt in them, for GOD hath ſhew'd it unto them. For the inviſible things of him from the Creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead: ſo that they are without excuſe.* That is, ſo much of GOD, as may be known by the Light of Nature (for *with GOD is terrible Majeſty; touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out*, Job XXXVII. 22, 23. *How little a portion is heard of him?* Job XXVI. 14.) But ſo much as may be known of GOD without Divine and Supernatural Revelation, was manifeſt in, or among, the very *Heathen* People, for of them St. *Paul* there ſpeaks. And how was it manifeſt in them? Thus, GOD himſelf had ſhew'd it to them. And which way had he done ſo, but by his *Works?* For though GOD is a *Being* in his own nature *inviſible*, and his *eſſential Power* and *Godhead* cannot be ſeen in themſelves; yet are they, and ever have been from the Creation

Creation of the World clearly ſeen in his *Works*. How are they ſeen in his *Works*? By the Eye of the Soul, or the Underſtanding, they are *underſtood*. And by what, but by the things that are made? All the viſible Creatures, from the higheſt to the loweſt, are as ſo many *Books*, wherein all men have been able to read the *Eternal Being* and *Power* of GOD. In ſhort, GOD hath left ſuch legible Characters of his Infinite *Power* and *Godhead* imprinted on the World, and all things therein; and hath indued man with ſuch a Faculty of diſcerning them, that whoſo makes not this good uſe of his Underſtanding, to *read* and *learn* this from the Creatures, is without *excuſe*, and a wilfully blind *Fool*. And this is it (whatever the *Atheiſt* is pleas'd to fancy to himſelf, as *Fools* are wont to be very *Fanciful*) that hath in all Ages brought men univerſally to agree in this belief; even as all men who ſee the clear day light, are agreed that the Sun is up, although they ſee it not. And this will always be a ſufficient proof of a GOD to every one that uſeth his *Reaſon* to conſider things; and to him that doth not ſo, there can be no *rational* proof of any thing.

Now the *Works* of GOD are either the *common* Works of *Creation* and *Univerſal Providence*; or the *rarer* Works of *Special* and *Extra-*

Extraordinary Providence; and Wiſe-men have ever been wont by both theſe to reaſon themſelves into the belief of a GOD. We will at preſent conſider but ſome few of them.

1. Obſerve the whole and entire *frame* and *Fabrick* of the *viſible World*. What leſs can we gather from it, but that there is ſome *Infinite Power* and *Wiſdom*, that contrived this vaſt Building, and ſet all things thus together in that *beautiful*, *curious*, and *uſeful* order wherein we behold them? If one ſee but a *Houſe* ſtrongly and magnificently built, wiſely and uſefully contrived, gloriouſly and ſumptuouſly adorn'd and furniſh'd, though he as yet ſee no man appear in it, or about it, will he be ſuch a *Fool* as to ſay, it had no *Builder*? *For every Houſe is builded by ſome man; but he that built all things is GOD*, *Heb.* III. 4. If one ſee a *Watch* or a *Clock*, and obſerve how artificially all the ſeveral parts of it are faſhion'd, and put together; and farther, how all the little *Wheels*, though divers of them have ſeveral motions of their own, do all concur to one conſtant and regular motion of the *Hand* or *Index*; though he neither ſaw it made, nor know who made it, will he be ſo fooliſh as to ſay it had no *maker*? How much more a *Fool* muſt he be, who daily

daily beholds the admirable frame of *Heaven*, *Earth*, *Sea* and *Air*, and all things therein; and obſerves the glorious *beauty* and *ſplendor*, the unexpreſſible *variety*, the wonderful *contrivance*, the vaſt *compaſs* and *capacity*, the regular and conſtant *courſes*, *motion* and *order* of them all; the ample *proviſion* made for every thing agreeable to its nature, the mutual *ſervice* and *uſefulneſs* of one thing to another, and innumerable other tokens of *Power*, *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, every-where viſible; and yet after all, talks at this rate, *Though I know not which way theſe things ſhould come to be as they are, yet ſurely there needed neither* Power, *nor* Wiſdom, *nor* Goodneſs, *to make, contrive, and order them thus. And though I have a very fair and rational account given me in that which we call the* Scripture, *how they come to be thus, yet I will not believe it. It may be they were always thus of themſelves, or they happen'd to be thus by chance, but ſurely they had no* powerful Maker, *or* wiſe Contriver. He that talk'd thus of a *Houſe*, or a *Watch*, you would think he were *mad*; and ſhall not he that talks thus of the *World*, and all things therein, be a *Fool*? Yet this is *it*, and this is *all* that the *Atheiſt* hath to ſay.

2. Let us come to ſome particulars, and take but a ſlight view of ſome of thoſe ſeveral ſorts of things which we ſee, and daily reap the benefit

benefit of; and ſee if we can find any one thing whereof any reaſonable account can be given, without the belief of a GOD.

Let us *firſt* lift up our eyes to the *Heavens* above, and obſerve *How the heavens declare the glory of* GOD, *and the firmament ſheweth his handy work*, Pſal XIX. 1. *Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created theſe things, that bringeth out their hoſt by number*, Iſa. XL. 26. *I, even my hand have ſtretched out the Heavens, and all their hoſt have I commanded*, Iſa. XLV. 12. What a vaſt *Round* do we there ſee encompaſſing this world of Creatures? Of what a wonderful *greatneſs* are thoſe bright *Globes of Light* which move within it, The *Sun*, the *Moon* and *Stars*; ſome whereof are certainly known to be many and many times bigger than this whole Globe of *Earth* and *Water*, whereon we live. How fitly are all thoſe glorious and ſparkling Lights plac'd in the *Firmament* for our advantage, to afford us both *light*, and *warmth*, and *nouriſhment* here below? How *orderly* and *conſtantly* do they move to ſhed abroad their Influences the more equally upon all the Earth, and for the right proportioning of our *Seaſons*? Were they nearer us, they would *dazle* and *blind* us, inſtead of *enlightning* us; *ſcorch* and *burn up*, inſtead of *warming* and *cheriſhing* the Earth. Were they farther off, the Earth would be always

ways *frozen* and *barren*, and we ſhould die with *hunger* and *cold*. Did they not move round the lower World, their influences could not in any equal proportion be diſtributed to the ſeveral parts of the Earth; there would be no certain *viciſſitudes*, and orderly returns of *Night* and *Day*, *Spring* and *Summer*, *Autumn* and *Winter*. Much of the World would be uſeleſs through too much *cold* and *darkneſs*, or exceſs of *heat*. How *regular*, *even* and *conſtant* are their motions, always finiſh'd exactly in the ſame ſpace of time, and returning to the ſame points? They have never in the leaſt varied them for ſo many Ages, whether it be their *yearly*, *monthly*, or *daily* courſes. Nor is one *year*, or one *day* in any year, ever one *minute* either *longer* or *ſhorter*, than another *year*, or another *day* at the ſame time of another year. From ſuch Obſervations as theſe, even the wiſe Heathens, ſuch as *Cicero*, *Plutarch*, and the reſt, rationally concluded, that there muſt needs be a G O D. Yea, ſays *Cicero*, *Who would call him a Man, who when he ſees the Motions of Heaven ſo certain, the Orders of the Stars ſo ſetled, and all things ſo connected among themſelves*, &c. *ſhould yet deny that there is reaſon in them, or ſay, this were done by chance, when by no underſtanding we are able to conceive, with how great wiſdom theſe things are govern'd.* Yea, *What can be ſo plain and*

clear

clear (ſaith he) *when we look up to Heaven, and view the Celeſtial Bodies, as that there is ſome* GOD *of moſt excellent underſtanding, whereby theſe things are ordered?*

Let us now look down upon this great body of *Earth* and *Water* below, and obſerve how it hangs like a little round Ball in the midſt of the thin *Air* incompaſſing it round about, notwithſtanding its prodigious bulk and weight, and all that huge load of things continually upon it. Yet, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſaith, *Pſal.* LXXVIII. 69 *GOD hath eſtabliſhed it for ever.* And *Pſal.* CIV. 5. *He hath laid the foundations of the earth, that it ſhould not be moved for ever.* See it incircled about with *Water* as with a *Girdle*, the *Seas*, as it were, continually roaring againſt it, and threatning to overflow, and ſwallow it up. And who but GOD, can we think, *hath ſet a bound that they may not paſs over, that they turn not again to cover the earth?* Pſal. CIV. 9. *He ruleth the raging of the Sea; when the waves thereof ariſe, he ſtilleth them*, Pſal. LXXXIX. 9. *He hath ſaid, Hitherto ſhalt thou come, but no farther; and here ſhall thy proud waves be ſtayd*, *Job* XXXVIII. 11. Obſerve, how both *Earth* and *Water* are ſtock'd, and plentifully furniſhed with all ſorts of things which are uſeful for the ſervice of men. With *Stones*, *Metals*, and *Minerals* of all ſorts, for building, fire,

fire, and many other neceſſary uſes; with *Herbs* and *Plants*, and *Fruits*, *Fiſhes*, *Fowls* and *Cattel*; and all things needful for the labour and ſervice of man, for his Food and Rayment, for his Phyſick, and Delight, and Recreation; and all in the greateſt *plenty* and *variety*. How many thouſand ſorts of *Herbs*, *Shrubs*, *Trees* and *Flowers* find we on the Earth? How many learned Volumes are filled with the vertues of them? How admirably is every one of theſe form'd and contrived, with *Roots* whereby they are faſten'd in the Earth, and ſuck in proper nouriſhment from it; with *Veins* to convey that nouriſhment into all the many *Branches*, *Leaves* and *Fruit*; with *Bark* and *Rind* to guard from the violence of both heat and cold; with *Husks* and *Shells* to cheriſh the Fruit and Seed, and *Leaves* to defend the ſame unto perfect ripeneſs; and with *Seed* for a new propagation? How doth the ſame kind of *Seed* always produce the very ſame kind of *Plant*, and often with a moſt wonderful increaſe of its *Fruit*; eſpecially in ſuch of them, as are moſt neceſſary, as in *Corn* for *Bread*, and *Fruits* for food of all ſorts? How do the ſame kind of *Plants* come up in the ſame *Seaſon* of the year, of the ſame *vertue*, of the ſame *form* and *figure*, both in the *Branches*, *Leaves*, *Fruits* and *Flowers*? What abundance of va-

rious

rious *Living Creatures* breed daily, and feed in the *Earth* and *Water*, and fly in the open *Air*? And how are they all fitted for their ſeveral *Elements*; *Fiſhes* with *fins* to ſwim, *Birds* with *wings* to fly, and other things with *feet* to *walk*? How aptly are all things furniſhed with Inſtruments of *ſenſe* and *motion*, *nouriſhment*, *generation* and *defence*? What one part about them, or within them, is *ſuperfluous* or *uſeleſs*, or could be well ſpared? And how conveniently are they all *ſet*, and *placed*, and *united* together for their ſeveral uſes? The curious and wiſe contrivance of the meaneſt Creature the fine contexture of the little body of any ſmall *Inſect*; as of a *Fly*, or a *Spider*, hath been enough to exerciſe the greateſt Wits, and to fill whole Books with the wonders of them, and yet one half of them is not diſcover'd. Each *Animal*, great and ſmall, is indued with ſuch *Powers* and *Faculties*, as are neceſſary for its own *ſuſtenance* and *preſervation* whilſt it lives, and for the *propagation* of its kind after it; hath a care of its *Young-ones*, and provides for them; teaches them to ſhift for themſelves, and then leaves them to do ſo. Every thing carefully ſhuns what's *hurtful* to it, and picks and chuſes what's *proper* for it. Whence now comes all this? From blind *chance*? It may be ſome blind *Fool* may think ſo, but 'tis certain

tain he is a *Fool* for thinking ſo. Did *Stones* and *Timber*, and all other materials, ever jump by *Chance*, into a ſtately *Houſe*? Did the *Letter-ſtamps* in the *Printer*'s boxes, ever yet ſave both the *Writer* and *Printer* their labour, and hit ſo together by *Chance*, as to make a *Learned Book*, or a *Wiſe Diſcourſe*? Could things in the world have been contrived *wiſelier* or more *fitly*, to all ends and purpoſes, than they are? And could things be wiſely contrived, without a Wiſe *Contriver*? If *Chance* (which is indeed *nothing* at all) could produce a thing *once* or *twice*, which yet is *impoſſible*, can any be ſo fooliſh as to think it could be the mother of *conſtant Order*? To ſay, That all things are produced, and preſerved *conſtantly* in one *regular* Courſe and Order, by *Chance*, is a *Contradiction* that can fit the mouth of a *Fool* only.

Obſerve we next, how all things in the world do viſibly ſerve and work together for ſome wiſe *end* and *purpoſe*; and then conſider what ſhould *guide* and *direct* them all in working to that end? 'Tis eaſie for any one to ſee, That moſt of the Creatures are ſuch, as are exceeding uſeful and neceſſary; and the world would be an inconvenient place without them, and a very confuſed and dangerous place too, if things in it did not act as they do. And tho, it may be, ſome few things we

may be able to name, the neceſſity, uſe, and goodneſs whereof, we cannot yet diſcern; yet have we reaſon to impute this to our *Ignorance*, or it may be, more to our *Negligence*, and *Sloth*, and *Inadvertency*. It is certain there be many things which people are apt to think *vain*, yea, *hurtful*, which yet Induſtrious and Learned men, who ſtudy Nature, have found to be of ſpecial *Uſe* and *Virtue*. Not a *Toad* or a *Spider*, or any *poiſonous* and *venomous* thing, but the Skilful know how to make good uſe of it, and find that it could not well be wanting: And we may well preſume as much of other things, the uſe whereof we are not yet acquainted with. They may ſerve to ſuck out and carry away ſome of thoſe *malignant* humours and qualities, which might infect the *Food* we feed on, or *Air* we breathe in; or to ſet off the Worth, the Beauty, and the Uſefulneſs of other things, with the greater advantage; that we may take the more notice of them, and be more thankful for them: Or they may be, if not immediately uſeful to us, yet very needful to ſome or other of thoſe many creatures which are immediately ſerviceable to us: However, they ſerve to exerciſe our *Induſtry* and *Care*, and to let us ſee GOD's *Providence* over us, in keeping us from the hurt they might do us. But that which we ſhould more eſpecially obſerve,

ſerve, is, That a very great many things which are without *Reaſon* and *Underſtanding*, or ſo much as *Senſe* in themſelves, do yet work together for the good and preſervation of one another, and of the whole World, in as good *Order*, as tho they had a *Rule* to go by, and *Underſtanding* to be guided by it, and ſate in *Conſultation* how to do the beſt for the common good. So that what *Man* doth in this kind by the help of *Reaſon*, *They* all do much more *conſtantly* and *unerringly* without it. The *Heavens* very orderly and duly ſhed abroad their influence of *Light* and *Heat*, to make the *Earth* both fruitful and pleaſant; to direct, ſuſtain, and cheriſh both man and beaſt upon it. *In them hath GOD ſet a tabernacle for the ſun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a ſtrong man to run a race: His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof*, Pſal. XIX. 4, 5, 6. The *earth* yields its fruits of every ſort, in their due ſeaſons, and brings forth a proper ſort of *food* for every thing that live upon it. *He cauſeth the graſs to grow for the cattle, and herb for the ſervice of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to ſhine, and bread which ſtrengthneth man's heart*, Pſal. CIV. 14, 15.

14,15. The *Waters* contentedly keep their Channels and Bounds, both that there may be a ſufficient quantity of them together, to make a fit *habitation* for all the living things which can live no where elſe; and to leave dry land enough for other creatures to live upon. And becauſe the creatures of the earth cannot ſubſiſt without a ſufficiency of *Moiſture*, therefore *the waters go up by the mountains, they go down by the valleys, unto the place which GOD hath founded for them; he ſends the ſprings into the valleys which run among the hills; they give drink to every beaſt of the field, the wild aſſes quench their thirſt*, Pſal. CIV. 8, 10, 11. And that all the earth may be refreſh'd, and have *moiſture* enough to give juice to *Herbs* and *Trees*, theſe Waters, not only ſend forth *Springs* and *Rivers*, but abundance of *Vapours*; which in the *Air* thicken into *Clouds*, and are diſſolved again into ſeaſonable *ſhowers* ſcattered over the face of the earth. *He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them*, Job XXVI. 8. *He cauſeth the vapours to aſcend from the ends of the earth*, Pſalm CXXXV. 7. *He maketh ſmall the drops of waters, they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof, which the clouds do drop and diſtil upon man abundantly*, Job XXXVI. 27,28. *He makes the earth ſoft with ſhowers, his paths*

drop

drop fatneſs; *they drop upon the paſtures of the wilderneſs*, Pſal. LXV. 10, 11, 12. We cannot but obſerve ſeveral ſorts of *Earth* fitted for ſeveral ſorts of *Plants* and *Grain*; and ſeveral ſorts of *Plants* and *Grain* ſuited to the *Natures* and *Palates* of ſeveral ſorts of *Living Creatures*, and ſeveral ſorts of *Natures* and *Palates* in living creatures, whereby it comes to paſs, that one ſort *delights* in, and is *nouriſhed* with that which another ſort takes no *delight* in, and cannot be *nouriſhed* with, but perfectly *hates* and *ſhuns* as *poiſonous* or *hurtful* to it. And hence it is, that nothing is *loſt*, or is in *vain*; but what one *refuſeth*, another *chuſeth*; and hence there is *enough* for *all*; and there needs be no *ſtrife* or *contention* about any thing; for as there is enough for all, ſo is there *Variety* for *each one*. We ſee yet farther, what *proviſion* is made in Nature for the *ſafety* and *defence* of every thing: And how every thing naturally, without *teaching*, endeavours to *preſerve* and *defend* it ſelf: One has *Horns*, another *Hoofs*, another has *Fangs* or long *Teeth*; and none of theſe needs be taught how to uſe his natural *Weapons*: And ſuch as have no ſuch *Natural* weapons, have either *Reaſon* to invent *artificial* ones, as *men*; or ſome other way of ſaving themſelves, as *Birds* have *Wings* to flye for it; other things have *ſwiftneſs* of foot to run for it; even

Moles and *Worms* have a wonderful faculty of ſpeeding into the earth to hide themſelves: *In the cedars the birds make their neſts; the fir-trees are a houſe for the ſtork. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies*, Pſal. CIV. 17, 18. Young things no ſooner fall from their dams, but they ſeek for milk, and find it without a guide. The little *Lamb* runs to the pap immediately, which the little *Infant* cannot do: Why? The *Ewe* wants wit to direct the *Lamb*, but the *Mother* knows how to direct her *Child*. *Birds* chuſe out the moſt *ſecret* places for their *neſts*, and make them with ſo much curioſity, as man's art cannot imitate. The curious works of the little *Bee* or *Silk-worm*, is a very amazing thing to conſider: The induſtry and providence of the *Ant*, and the wonders that the *Spider* works, are matters of admiration to us. 'Twould be endleſs to mention, and indeed impoſſible for man to diſcover one half of the wonderful things in nature. And he that can yet imagine that all theſe things are by *Chance*, and that there is no Superior *Power* and *Wiſdom* that governs all things, and directs them in their ſeveral Operations, muſt needs be more fooliſh than any beaſt.

Once again, Let us conſider of what kind of *Ingredients* this World, and the things therein do conſiſt, or are compounded: The

Elements

Elements of it, *Fire*, *Air*, *Earth*, and *Water*, are of *contrary* and mutually *deſtructive* Natures: Their chief Qualities are *Heat* and *Cold*, *Moiſture* and *Dryneſs*, and what things can be more *oppoſite* to one another? All things conſiſt of theſe things, and how come they to be be ſo evenly *temper'd*, and *blended* in ſuch a juſt proportion, as to agree *peaceably* together in the ſame body? Again, moſt things that we know in the world, laſt but for a while; *Plants*, *Trees*, *Beaſts*, *Birds*, *Fiſhes*, and *Men*, after a ſhort time *dye*, and are no more; but others of the ſame kind ſpring up, and are brought forth to ſupply their room. And thus the world is in a continual *Change*, and is continued by a conſtant courſe of *Generation* and *Corruption*; and one thing always ariſeth from the corruption of another. The *Seed* is ſown, and corrupts in the earth, and loſeth its form, and thence ſprings up a manifold increaſe. Now for any one to think with himſelf, how this is brought to paſs, will be but for ever to baffle and confound himſelf, unleſs he have recourſe to an *Infinite Power* and *Wiſdom*, that orders all things. *That which thou ſoweſt, is not quickned except it dye; and that which thou ſoweſt, thou ſoweſt not that body which ſhall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of ſome other grain.* Now what can follow hence, but, That

GOD giveth it a body, as it hath pleaſed him, and to every ſeed his own body? 1 Cor. XV. 36, 37, 38. Who but GOD, could ſo evenly *temper, blend,* and *balance, contrary* and *mutually-deſtroying* Natures, into one; ſo as the *Life,* and *Health, Strength,* and *Vigor* of the body ſo compounded, conſiſts in the right *Temperament* of theſe *Enemies*? Who but GOD can *raiſe* one thing from the *corruption* of another; make *Life* ſpring out of *Death,* and conſtantly provide for a new *Generation* of things, from the *Ruines* and *Rottenneſs* of thoſe that were before?

Laſtly; It is now time that we look a little *upon,* and *into* our ſelves; and ſee what cauſe we can find every one of himſelf, to ſay unto GOD with the *Pſalmiſt,* Pſal. CXXXIX. 14. *I will praiſe thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my ſoul knoweth right well.*

Firſt, Should we only look upon our *Bodies,* which are no more but the corruptible *Cottages* wherein our immortal *Souls* are for a while to lodge; tho we find they are made of *Fleſh,* and *Blood,* and *Bones,* covered with *Skin,* as the bodies of ſome other Creatures are; yet very wonderful is the *Frame* and *Contexture* of theſe materials in them. How fitly is every *Part* and *Member* faſhioned and placed,

ced, and connected to the reſt, to make it a proper *Inſtrument* of *Life* or *Senſe*, *Strength* or *Motion*? What one of thoſe Inſtruments of *Nouriſhment*, whereby our Food is *received*, *chew'd*, *ſwallow'd*, and *digeſted*; the fineſt parts of it *convey'd* through the whole body, for its neceſſary growth or repair, and the groſſer parts and dregs *caſt forth* as uſeleſs: What inſtrument of *Breathing*, what *Vein* or *Artery* for the carrying about of the *Blood* and *Spirits*; what *Bone*, *Nerve*, *Sinew*, *Muſcle*, *Joint*, *Ligament*, or *Griſtle*, for *Strength* or *Action*, could we either well ſpare, or wiſh better form'd or ſet for its uſe? What one *Senſe* of *Seeing*, *Hearing*, *Taſting*, *Smelling*, and *Touching*, could we be content to want? Or how can we imagine, that the *Inſtruments* of any of theſe *Senſes*, could have been wiſelier framed and placed? Nay, there is not a *Hair* or *Nail* about us, but when conſidered, is found to be of uſe for *Fence* or *Beauty*. Whoſo conſiders thoſe two little ſeats and ſprings of *Life*, *Senſe*, and *Motion*, the *Heart*, and the *Brain*; how wonderfully *form'd*, how ſtrongly *guarded*, how well *ſupplied* with a variety of inſtruments, conveying to them, and carrying from them, as it is neceſſary for keeping themſelves in right *Order* and *Temper*, and for the *Life*, *Health*, *Strength*, and *Direction* of the whole body: Whoſo but well obſerves the

the curious workmanſhip of the *Eye* or *Ear*, the two *Intelligencers* of the *Soul*; or thinks on the wonderful ways of *Seeing* and *Hearing*: Or he that conſiders the Inſtruments of *Speech*, and the *Uſe*, as well as *Propriety* of that excellent Faculty to *Mankind*; cannot chuſe but fall into the higheſt admiration of that *Infinite Power*, *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs*, to which he owes all theſe things!

And yet what are all theſe to the *Wonders* of our *Souls*? Could we think it worth our while to come acquainted a little better with our ſelves, and to this end ſometimes to enter in as far as we can into the ſeveral Myſteries within us, and enquire after that *Soul* or *Spirit* which is ſerved and waited on by all theſe *Bodily Inſtruments*, and makes what uſe of them it thinks good; we ſhould be ſure the more we know of our own *Souls* the more alſo to know of God, whoſe *Image* they bear. Some ſuch thing every one of us feels within himſelf; which is the *life* of his *Body*, and doth all by it, whatſoever it doth. When the *Body* lies dead, it hath for a ſhort time all its *Parts* and *Inſtruments* intire; but they are altogether uſeleſs. It's *Life*, *ſenſe*, *motion*, *grace* and *beauty*, all is gone, and nothing left but a Cold heavy lump, like to a Frozen clod of Clay. And why is it thus, but that the *Soul* is fled? O then! What, and how admira-

admirable are the powers of that *Spirit* in Man, which actuates his *body*, directs and commands it, and every *member* of it as it ſelf pleaſeth; at whoſe will it moves or reſts, and by whoſe preſence it liveth? Yea, what is *that*, without which we are no longer *men*? 'Tis the *Soul* which *ſees* and *hears* by theſe bodily inſtruments; 'tis the *Soul* that *diſcerns* and *judges* of all the numerous *figures* and *colours*, *magnitudes* and *proportions*, *meaſures* and *diſtances*, *motions*, *ſounds* and *voices*, *harmonies* and *diſcords*; that *diſtinguiſheth* between *one* thing and *another*, *chuſeth* and *refuſeth*, and *orders* all our doings. Think well of it, What is it within us, that *thinks*, and *conſiders*, and *reaſons*, and *diſcourſeth* about all things without *words* or *noiſe*? What is it in us, which whilſt with theſe *bodies* we neither *ſee*, nor *hear*, nor *taſte*, nor *ſmell*, nor *feel*, can yet repreſent the ſeveral objects of all theſe *ſenſes* to it ſelf, whenever it has a mind to it, and hath as freſh and lively perceptions of them all in it ſelf, as if all theſe bodily *ſenſes* were actually exerciſed by them? What is the ſtrange power of *that* within us, which can make *preſent* to it ſelf things long ſince *paſt*, and things which are yet to *come*, as well as thoſe that *now are*; yea, and things which neither *are*, nor ever *have been*, as though they *were*? What's that in us, which

which whilſt we ſit ſtill, is *travelling* over the World, and taking a view of all *Times*, and can *imagine* thouſands of Worlds like unto This, and frame new *Notions*, and lay *Plots* within it ſelf; Model *Governments*, Martial *Armies*, and *conſider*, *diſpute*, and *reaſon* about ſuch Things as tho they were real? What is *that* in us, which is *awake*, whilſt our *Bodies* are laid to *ſleep*; and ſometimes runs over in our *ſleep*, all things that paſſed the day before; *diſcourſes* of them, and *contrives*, and *deſigns* for the future too? Alas! we *underſtand* but a very little of *our ſelves*, and far leſs than we might do, if we would a little more *ſtudy* our ſelves; we know not how we are *nouriſhed*, nor how we *grow*, nor how we *ſee* and *hear*, how we *think* or *dream*; nor the ſtrange operations of our *Imagination* and *Fancy*. But however, we *feel* that there is *ſomething* in us that doth ſuch things; we find that *ſomething* in us doth *remember*, and *underſtand*, and *diſpute*, and *conſult*, and *deliberate*, and *reſolve*, and *forecaſt*, and *chuſe*, and *refuſe*: Yea, that often *reflects* upon *our ſelves*; and *accuſes* or *excuſes*, *condemns* or *acquits* us, *applauds* or *reproves* us, is *vexed* and *grieved*, or *pleaſed* and *delighted* with our behaviour. We find that we are able in a numberleſs variety of *Words*, to make our *Thoughts* known to others, and by the ſame means to underſtand the *thoughts* of

of others. We can mutually give and take *advice* and *counſel, teach, comfort and reprove* one another. We find *ſomething* in us, that can diſcern the *uſe* and *benefit*, the *hurt* or *danger* of things about us, and provide *for* or *againſt* them. And now when ſuch things as theſe, which every one may feel in himſelf, are well thought on; can we really remember what *we our ſelves* are, and yet be ſuch *fools* as to ſay or think there is no *GOD*? If any man be *doubtful*, whether there be a GOD or no, he muſt needs be *ignorant* of *himſelf*. For certainly he that ever conſiders, either his own nature, or the many things which he every day ſees, muſt needs even naturally, ſometimes at leaſt, ask himſelf this Queſtion, *Whence* can I imagine all theſe things to come? what great *Power* and *VViſdom* is it that doth in all things diſplay it ſelf? Let me conſider it well.

1. Where all things viſibly are in a moſt *wiſe* order, there muſt needs be *VViſdom*; and where all things do *conſtantly* continue in the ſame wiſe order of *VVorking*, there muſt be *Power*. And where ſuch ample and excellent *proviſion* is made for the preſervation of all things, and for our welfare eſpecially; there muſt needs be *Goodneſs*: *VVhere* then is all this *Power* and *VViſdom*, and *Goodneſs* lodg'd? Things *are*, things *act*, things are exceeding *uſeful* and *good*; things have for ſome Thouſands

ſands of Years *continned*, or *ſucceeded* one another in a *conſtant order* and *uſefulneſs* one to another. Have they then all this originally in and of themſelves? Or is there ſome *Almighty*, moſt *VViſe*, and *good Being* over them; which at firſt *made*, and put them into this order, and ſtill *upholds* them in it?

2. Where there appears nothing at all of *Underſtanding* and *Reaſon*, it cannot be imagined, what either *Power*, *VViſdom* or *Goodneſs* there can be, to *make*, *order*, and *govern* things, and *uphold* them all, in that regular and uſeful way of working wherein we ſee them. And 'tis undeniable that there are abundance of things, which thus work very regularly and conſtantly, wherein there doth not appear any thing at all of *Reaſon* or *Underſtanding*. Only *Mankind*, of all the things that we are acquainted with, hath *Reaſon*. He therefore only can be thought capable of *Wiſdom*, and *VViſdom* is abſolutely neceſſary for the *making* and *ordering* of ſuch a World of things. Yet, alas, how far doth ſuch a Work as that exceed the *wiſdom* of *Men*? And if it exceeds the *wiſdom* of *Men*, how much more doth it exceed the *Power* of all other things which want *VViſdom*? For ſuch a work, there muſt be ſome *VViſdom* and *Power*, Infinitely exceeding thoſe of Man, or of any other thing that we are here acquainted

ted with. And therefore we muſt ſeek theſe in ſome *ſuperior Being*.

3. Either there muſt be ſomething *unmade*, and which *made* other things; or ſome of theſe things which now *are*, and are well known not to *have been* always, but to have had a *beginning*, began to be of *themſelves* without a *Maker*; or were made by a *Maker*, which was alſo *made*, and had a *beginning*. That nothing could *begin* to be of *it ſelf* without a *Maker*, is very plain; for before it *began* to be, it was *not*; and what was *not*, could have no *power*; and therefore could not *begin* to be of *it ſelf*. Whatever therefore had a *beginning*, had it from *another*, which could make it to be. And if that *other* had a *beginning* too, the ſame may be ſaid of it, that it had it from *another*, and ſo we muſt go on of neceſſity, till we find ſomething which had *no beginning*; but was *unmade*, and gave *beginning* to the *firſt* thing that ever *begun* to be. If then, it was any of theſe viſible things, which was *unmade*, and without *beginning*; in all reaſon, we muſt think it to be that which appears the moſt *noble* and *excellent*, which hath *Reaſon* and *Wiſdom*; and this, as far as we can judge of things, muſt be *Man*, for whoſe *uſe* and *benefit*, all things viſible ſeem to be made. If therefore *Man*, excelling all viſible things in perfection of Nature, be not of *himſelf*, without

out *beginning*, neither *made* any one thing in Nature ſerving to his uſe; how can we imagine this of any other viſible thing? It cannot be thought, without the greateſt folly imaginable, that *Man* was made by any of theſe viſible things, which are ſo much *inferior* to him in *Perfection* of Nature; and which ſeem to be of no *uſe* at all, if not made for him. But we Men are very ſure, that we are ſo far from being able to *make* any of theſe things, that with all our ſearch and ſtudy, we cannot underſtand the Natures of them.

4. And we are altogether as ſure, that we are not *of our ſelves* without *beginning*, as we are, that we *made not* one thing in Nature. It is but a very little while ſince any of us now living came into this World, and it will be but a very little while more, before we muſt go out of it again. We knew not how we came hither when we came, and we know as little how we ſhall go hence; and we have but a little power over our ſelves whilſt we ſtay here. There was a time, not long ſince, when we had not one of the *powers* and *faculties* which now we have, and when we were nothing at all of that which we now perceive our ſelves to be. We are therefore as ſure, as that we *are* at all, that we had both our *being*, and all that is now in us, from ſome *other*; who muſt needs therefore be of far greater

greater *power* and *wiſdom* than we are of. Our *Parents* were indeed the *Inſtruments* of our *being*; but it is as true, that they were no more but *Inſtruments* of it. For *they*, and their *Parents* before them, and all *Parents* that ever were, could but ſay of *themſelves*; and their coming into the World, the very ſame things that we now ſay of *our ſelves*. It was never in the power of any *Parents* yet, to make their *Children* what they pleas'd; no more than it is in the power of a *Pencil* in the hand of a *Painter*, to chuſe what kind of *Picture* it ſhall make; or indeed whether it ſhall make any *Picture* at all. No *Parents* could ever aſſure themſelves that they ſhould have *Children*. Neither knew they how they were *form'd* in the Womb; the *faſhioning* and ſetting together of the Parts, and putting *life* into them, being things infinitely exceeding their *power* and *skill*, were therefore no part of their *care*. They knew not whether any thing ſhould be *conceived*; or being *conceived*, ſhould ever be brought forth; or what it ſhould be, *Male* or *Female*, *perfect* or *imperfect*, a *Man* or a *Monſter*, *wiſe* or *fooliſh*, *alive* or *dead*: no more than the Husbandman that caſts his *Corn* into the Furrows, takes care how to *form* its *Roots* or *Blade*, or knows how it *grows*, or what it will prove at laſt. And now that we *are*, and *live*, we find our

ſelves in the *power*, and at the *diſpoſal* of *another*. We cannot bring to paſs what we will; we cannot accompliſh our own *Deſigns* and *Purpoſes* as we would. We cannot *preſerve* to our ſelves our preſent *Poſſeſſions*. We cannot *get* what we *would* have, nor *rid* our ſelves of what we *would not* have. We cannot make the *Sun* to ſhine on us, nor the *Wind* to blow upon us, nor the *Rain* to fall, *where* and *when* we would have it; nor our *Corn* and *Graſs* to grow, nor our *Cattel* to inceeaſe, nor our *Food*, when we have it, to nouriſh us. We cannot keep our *Bodies* from *ſickneſs*, *lameneſs*, *pains* and *decays*; or make that part of them *ſtraight* which is *crooked*, or *beautiful* which is *deformed*. We cannot keep out our *fears*, nor quiet our *thoughts*, nor prevent *caſualties*, nor prolong *life*, nor keep away *death* and *corruption*. What then can we rationally think of our ſelves, but that we are the *work*, and in the *Power*, and under the *Government* of *One* who is infinite in *Wiſdom*, *Power* and *Goodneſs*, who *made*, *preſerves*, and *diſpoſeth* of us, and of all things, as it pleaſeth him. And who is that, but God? *He that created the Heavens, and ſtretched them out; He that ſpread forth the Earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and ſpirit to them that walk therein*, Iſa. XLII. V.

5. It

5. It is certainly known, How we men come into the World by *generation* ſucceſſively one after another. *One generation paſſeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever*, Eccl. I. 4. Is it now poſſible for any one to conceive, that among all the *Generations* of men that have been, there was no *firſt Man* or *Men*, at whom theſe *Generations* of men firſt *began?* If there was any *firſt man*, as no man can conceive but there was; had he a *beginning?* or had he *no beginning?* If he had a *beginning*, whence had he it? He could not give it himſelf, as we have before ſeen. No *other* man could give it him, for he was the *firſt*. Did he then ſpring as a *Plant* out of the *Earth?* 'Tis too ridiculous a Conceit to come into a rational man's head. How then ſhould he have his *beginning*, but from GOD? Will any ſay, he had *no beginning?* Then he muſt ſay he was *eternal*, and had *eternally* his *being*, and all his *powers*, in, and of himſelf; and if ſo, how came he to *die*, and *be no more?* He who had *eternally being* and *life* in himſelf, *would* he, nay, *could* he chuſe *not to be*, or *to die*, and to leave behind him Children of ſo little *power*, and of ſo ſhort a *life*, and not ſo much as the leaſt notice among them, that they had ſuch a Father? Will any think it reaſonable to ſay, That there was *no firſt man?* This only remains to be ſaid by him, who

would not have a GOD. But this is that which none but a *fool* can think reaſonable. Men of *ſenſe* and *reaſon* have ever accounted it moſt *abſurd* to talk of an *infinite ſucceſſion* of things one after another, without beginning; of a *number* of things, wherein there is no *firſt* thing; or which had no beginning. At this rate, an *infinite number* of Generations are long ago *paſt*, and an *infinite number* is the *greateſt number*; if there can be ſuch a thing. And yet there have been *more Generations* ſince that *infinite number* of them was paſt, and there may be *more* ſtill, and ſo there is ſomething *greater* than *infinite*, and a number *greater* than the *greateſt*. No wiſe man did ever pretend to underſtand how ſuch a thing could poſſibly be, and ſo it muſt paſs among the ravings of a doting *fool*. Men who are wont to talk ſo, as that they would be underſtood, or can underſtand themſelves, will ſay, That of that great number, or thoſe many Generations of men, which have been in the World, there muſt neceſſarily have been ſome *firſt man*, or *men*, and that *he* or *they* that were *firſt*, could never have been at all, or had any power to propagate others, without a *Maker*. And the very ſame muſt we ſay of the whole world of things which are within our view. What uſe can we think the *World* ſerves for, but for the uſe of thoſe *living*

ving Creatures which are in it, and more especially of *Man?* For what use is a *House*, but for that of the *Inhabitants?* And it were no less absurd to think, that the *Heavens* and the *Earth* made *Men*, and other *living Creatures*; than it is to think, that the *House* made the *Inhabitants* that dwell in it. And then if the *Inhabitants* know and confess that they made not the *House*, as no body but a Fool will think that the *House* made *them:* so any but a Fool will say, some *other* made the *House*. As then *every House is built by some man*, so *he that built all things, is* GOD, Heb. III. 4.

Thus all things, both *without* us, and *within* us, do naturally lead us to the acknowledgment of a GOD, if we will but make use of our Reason; and if we will not, that's it which makes us *fools*. *GOD hath not left himself without witness, in that he doth good, and giveth us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*, Acts XIV. 17. And we may easily perceive, if we will think of any thing, that *He is not far from every one of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being: for we are his off-spring*, as the *Heathen Poets could tell us*, Acts XVII. 27, 28. But if any one continue so foolish as not to confess this, 'tis fit he should be sent to School to the Beasts: as *Job* XII. 7, 8, &c. *Ask the beasts*

and they ſhall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they ſhall tell thee; the fiſhes of the ſea ſhall declare unto thee; who knoweth not all theſe, that the hand of the LORD *hath wrought this, in whoſe hand is the ſoul of every living thing, and the breath of mankind?*

2. And yet beſides the works of *Creation*, and of *ordinary Providence*, it cannot be denied, but there are works of an *extraordinary Providence* to be obſerved, whereby GOD doth yet further diſcover himſelf unto us.

'Tis certain, that things do ordinarily keep one natural conſtant courſe and order, and vary not from it. *As* GOD *commanded, and they were created; ſo he hath eſtabliſhed them for ever and ever; he hath made a decree which ſhall not paſs*, Pſal. CXLVIII. 5, 6. *They continue this day according to his ordinance*, Pſal. CXIX. 91. Now as the conſtant orderly courſe of all things in nature, ſhews that there is an Infinite *Wiſdom* and *Power*, that put them into this order, and fixed them in this courſe, keeping and continuing them *ordinarily* in it: So when *ſometimes*, and upon very remarkable *occaſions*, this *ordinary* courſe of Nature is changed, and things are done *above* the power, and quite *contrary* to the courſe of Nature: and moreover, when the wiſeſt *counſels*, and moſt hopeful *endeavours*, and the moſt likely *means*, ſuch as rarely fail,

and

and in all appearance and reaſon ſhould ſucceed well; are all on a ſudden blaſted, and quite diſappointed; and not only ſo, but produce the quite contrary to that for which they were deſign'd; and all this by reaſon of ſome *inviſible power* which no man can diſcern, or by ſuch weak oppoſition, as none could imagine likely to prevail: What can we think leſs, but that there is an *over-ruling Providence* of GOD, who alway holds the Rains in his own hands, and doth whatſoever he will both in Heaven and in Earth?

It is eaſie to obſerve, that when *Wickedneſs* is grown up to a very extraordinary heighth in a Nation or Kingdom; though that *Nation* abounds in *Policy*, and *Strength*, and in all things that ſeem to promiſe *ſucceſs*, and perſuade to *ſecurity*; yet all on a ſudden, when there ſeems leaſt cauſe of fear, by ſome *extraordinary* unlook'd for Judgment, it is brought to utter ruine and deſtruction. And on the other hand, When a *good* and *religious* People are oppreſs'd by *Tyrants*, and aſſaulted by moſt potent Enemies, and hemm'd in on all ſides with ſeemingly inevitable dangers, ſo as they ſink into deſpair, and look for nothing but being ſwallow'd up of thoſe who hate them: all on a ſudden, when they could ſee no reaſon to hope for any ſuch thing, the threatning Cloud flies over them, and rains

down vengeance on their Enemies; and the Sun ſhines forth on them brighter than ever. Who can conclude leſs, than that the hand of GOD is in all this? Now both Hiſtories and Experience have furniſhed us with Examples of ſuch things as theſe: and he muſt be of a very obſtinate humour that is not convinced by them. How eaſie eſpecially is it to obſerve in the *ſacred Hiſtory* of the *Bible*, GOD's wonderful and extraordinary both *Judgments* and *Mercies*, both towards whole *Nations*, and alſo private *Perſons* and *Families*? Enough there is of this kind to aſſure us, *That 'tis GOD that changeth the times and the ſeaſons, who removeth Kings, and ſetteth up Kings*, Dan. II. 21. *That againſt him there is no wiſdom, nor underſtanding, nor counſel*, Prov. XXI. 30. *That he turneth rivers into a wilderneſs, and water-ſprings into a dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenneſs, for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein. He turneth the wilderneſs into a ſtanding water, and dry ground into water-ſprings, and there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a City for habitation*, Pſal. CVII. 33, &c.

He brought in a flood upon the world of the ungodly, and ſaved Noah the preacher of righteouſneſs. He turned the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into aſhes, and deliver'd juſt Lot,

2 Pet.

2 Pet. II. 5, 6, 7. *He ſhew'd his ſigns and his wonders in the land of Egypt, and brought forth his people*, Pſal. CV. 27. *He led them through the depths of the ſea, and drowned their enemies. The earth open'd and ſwallow'd Dathan, and covered the Congregation of Abiram. A fire was kindled in their company, the flame burnt up the wicked.* Pſal. CVI. 9, &c. *The Sun ſtood ſtill, and the Moon ſtaid, until the people had avenged themſelves upon their enemies. The Sun ſtood ſtill in the midſt of heaven, and haſted not to go down about a whole day*, Joſh. X. 13. The Walls of the City *Jerico* fell down when at *Joſhuah*'s command the People ſhouted, *Joſh.* VI. 20. *The Angel of the LORD went out, and ſmote in the Camp of the Aſſyrians an hundred, fourſcore and five thouſand*, 2 Kings 19. 35. What ſhould I ſay more, but as the *Apoſtle*, Heb. XI. 32. *The time would fail me, to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Sampſon, and of Jephtha, of David alſo, and Samuel, and of the Prophets. Who through faith ſubdued kingdoms, obtained promiſes, ſtopp'd the mouths of Lions, quenched the violence of fire, eſcaped the edge of the ſword; out of weakneſs were made ſtrong, waxed valiant in fight, turn'd to flight the Armies of the Aliens.* In a word, *The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth; the wicked is ſnared in the work of his own hands*, Pſal. IX. 16. *So that a man ſhall ſay,*

ſay, Verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily he is a GOD *that judgeth in the earth,* Pſal. LVIII. 11.

And now after all this, I hope, it is abundantly manifeſt, that the *Atheiſt*, being confident that *there is no* GOD, makes himſelf confident in a matter wherein all the *reaſon* in the world is againſt him, and againſt all the Evidences that can be given of what he denies, how true ſoever it be.

It cannot therefore be thought needful any otherwiſe than thus, to ſhew that he hath *no reaſon* at all for his confidence. For when *all reaſon* appears againſt one's Opinion, 'tis moſt certain there can be *no reaſon* for it. All that he can ſay for himſelf is but this, That there appear to him ſome *Difficulties* in the Belief of a GOD, which he cannot conquer. And doth he not meet with as *many*, and as *unconquerable difficulties* in the denying of a GOD? If he do not, 'tis only becauſe he hath no mind to ſee them; for I am ſure all the wiſeſt men have met with ſuch. But if it be (as the *Atheiſt* pretends) more difficult to believe that there is a GOD, than to believe there is none, or than barely *not to believe* there is; how comes it to paſs, that the generality of mankind hath always believ'd it? How is it, that nothing ſeems more *natural* and *eaſie* to moſt men, than to believe

it;

it; and nothing more *hard* and *against Nature*, than to conceive how it should be otherwise? Why hath no *Atheist*, by propounding and demonstrating these *Difficulties*, been able hitherto to dissuade any considerable number of men from believing this? Can the *Atheist* give any rational account how this world could be as it is, or how he himself came to be what he is, if there be no GOD? If he can, why hath he not, in so many Ages of the world, let men see that he can? Why have so few receiv'd any satisfaction from what he hath said to that purpose? Surely it must be, because men find many more *Difficulties* in believing that he speaks reason, or in perceiving that he gives any reasonable account of things without a GOD, than they do in believing that there is a GOD. He hath sometimes one thing to say, and sometimes another, as his *Invention* serves him. Sometimes the World may have been *Eternally*, without any *Beginning*; and sometimes there may have been *Eternal Matter*, which form'd it self he knows not how, into that variety of things, which we now see. Sometimes there may have been eternally an infinite multitude of small *Atomes* or *Motes*, dancing to and fro, till at last they hit and jumble by *chance*, into so many Bodies as the World now contains. And with such like *Imaginations*, as these, he

labours

labours to *confound* men's Thoughts, and to *divert* them from liſtning to that *rational* and *ſatisfactory* account, which the *Holy Scripture* hath given us, of the *Original* of all things. But as theſe *Atheiſtical* Wits, have never been able to ſatisfie one another, ſo as that they could come to agree in the ſame Principles; but have been at an irreconcileable difference, and an endleſs diſpute amongſt themſelves; not ſo much about what *certainly* was, as about what *poſſibly might have been*: So neither have any of them been able to convince any conſiderable numbers of men, no not of thoſe who know nothing of the *Scripture*, to think that the World could have been any of thoſe ways they dream of, without a GOD. And why ſo? But becauſe men have ever thought it more *difficult*, to be of any of their opinions, than to believe that there is a GOD. If the *Atheiſt* could but perſwade men that he had *reaſon* on his ſide, it would be very eaſie for him to draw them all over to his opinion; for their *luſts* are all on his ſide already. But till *Luſt* have ſo totally prevail'd over men, as quite to unman them, and put out the eye of *Reaſon*; the *Atheiſt's folly* is ſo viſible, that the *half-blind* eye of the *natural* man cannot but ſee it.

It's very hard (ſaith the *Atheiſt*) for a man to *comprehend* in his mind an *eternal infinite Being*, ſuch as GOD is ſaid to be; and how

how ſhould a man *believe* what he cannot *comprehend* by his Underſtanding? And indeed moſt true it is, that what is *eternal* and *infinite*, no *humane* Underſtanding can *fully* and *perfectly* comprehend. To *underſtand* a thing *fully* and *perfectly* in all things belonging to it, is to ſuppoſe it to have certain *Bounds* or *Limits* of *eſſence* and *perfection*, which if it had, it were not *Eternal* and *Infinite*. And true it is, That GOD is a *Being* of an *unlimited* and *boundleſs* Nature and Excellency, and therefore cannot be *fully*, or in *all things*, underſtood by man. But this is ſo far from making it *uneaſy* to believe that there is a GOD, that we cannot, when we conſider things well, but believe it. We therefore believe that there is a GOD, becauſe, when we conſider how many things there be in the World, and how many, and even unſearchable by us, are the excellencies and perfections of every thing in its kind, we cannot ſee how theſe things could be without a *Being incomprehenſible* and *infinitely excellent* and *perfect*, whence all *Being* and *Perfection* muſt be derived. Tho' therefore *man*, who is of a *finite* and *limited* Underſtanding, cannot *fully comprehend* the *Eternity* and *Infiniteneſs* of GOD, or throughly underſtand the *infinite Nature* and *Perfection* of GOD; yet may he underſtand and believe, that there is a *Being* which is *eternal* and

and *infinite*; that is to ſay, a GOD. And it is ſo *eaſy* to conceive that there is ſuch a *Being*, that it is not *poſſible* to conceive how there ſhould be none ſuch. We are very ſure, that we our ſelves, and other things, have a *being*; and yet we cannot *fully* comprehend, or *throughly* underſtand the *excellencies* and *perfections* of our own Nature, or of the nature of any thing elſe, how *ſmall* and *inconſiderable* ſoever it be. It cannot therefore be *hard* for us to believe that there is ſomething *incomprehenſible* by us, or which we cannot throughly in all things underſtand. And ſo *eaſie* is it for us to apprehend that there is ſome *eternal* Being, that we cannot conceive how there could be any thing at all without it. We cannot with any ſatisfaction to our ſelves, ſuppoſe, that once there was *nothing* at all. For were it ſo, that once there had been nothing at all; it muſt needs follow, That there never could have been *any thing* at all: If there once was *nothing*, whence ſhould *any thing* have come? There was in *nothing* no *power*, nor *diſpoſition* to any thing: *Nothing* of which any thing ſhould ſpring, Nothing to *make*, or *give a being* to any thing: *Nothing* is nothing, and *nothing* can do nothing: But now there are many things. Had they a beginning, or had they none? If they had no beginning, we have found *many Eternal* Beings, whilſt

we

we think it *hard* to believe there ſhould be *one*. If they had a beginning, then (as hath been ſaid), they had it of *themſelves*, or from ſome *other*. They had it not of themſelves, for before they *began* to be, they were *not*; and what *is not*, can *do nothing*. They muſt have it therefore from ſome *other*, and that *other* muſt be before them; and muſt be *Eternal* without beginning.

The Sum of all that hath been ſaid, is this: The *Atheiſt* being confident that there is no GOD, is *confident* in a matter whereof he can have no *reaſon* to be confident, and whereof he cannot pretend to have the leaſt meaſure of *Aſſurance*. He is confident without any reaſon or degree of Aſſurance, where his confidence is the moſt *dangerous* thing that can be to himſelf, and the moſt *miſchievous* thing that can be to the whole *World*. He chooſeth to follow a *groundleſs Opinion* wherein there is no *ſafety* to himſelf, and whence there can ariſe no *good*, but very much *hurt* to the World, rather than a *probable Opinion* at leaſt, which it is certainly *ſafe* for him to follow; and which can do no *hurt*, but much *good* to all Mankind. In denying that there is a GOD, he muſt grant that all the *happineſs* of the World depends upon a *Lie*, and that the World would be *undone* by the knowledg

ledg of the *Truth*. He is confident, where all the *reaſon* of the World is *againſt* his confidence. He is confident there is no GOD, tho he have all the *evidences* of a GOD that can be given of him, if there be one. GOD hath *ſpoken* unto men, ſo as GOD can be ſuppoſed to *ſpeak* unto them, if he be; GOD hath *appear'd* and *ſhew'd* himſelf to men, ſo, as if there be a GOD, any one can conceive that he ſhould *ſhew* himſelf. The *Atheiſt* finds the whole World of Mankind *conſenting* that there is a GOD; and he finds the *tokens* of *Infinite* Power, and *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs*, in all the works of *Creation* and *Providence*, both *common* and *extraordinary*: He cannot give any *rational account* at all of any of theſe things, without the belief of a GOD; and finally, he finds no ſuch *difficulties* in believing there is a GOD, but he finds many *more*, and *greater*, in conceiving how things ſhould be, as they are, without a GOD. Seeing, as hath been ſhewn, this is plainly the caſe; let all men of *common ſenſe* now judge, whether he who makes himſelf confident that there is no GOD, be not paſt all diſpute, a very *Fool*.

But now in vain, have we all this while been conſidering the *Atheiſts Folly*, if we our ſelves reſolve to be as much or greater *Fools* than he. And certainly, if it be (as it hath been

been proved) a very *fooliſh* thing to think that there is no GOD; it cannot be leſs *fooliſh* to live without any *regard* of GOD, as too many amongſt us ſeem to do; who behave themſelves ſo in the World, as if GOD had nothing to do with *them*, or *they* with *him*; or as tho it were all one to them, whether there be a GOD or no. If there be a GOD, and if none but *Fools* deny this, then are we to conſider that theſe things do neceſſarily follow.

1. Every one that is *wiſe*, doth take all poſſible care to *confirm* himſelf in ſo *ſtedfaſt* a belief of GOD, that nothing may be able to make him *doubt* of it. *Take heed*, therefore, *Brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living* GOD, Heb. III. 12. *The fear of the* LORD *that is Wiſdom*, Job XXVIII. 28. If there be a GOD, it muſt needs be the greateſt piece of *Wiſdom* that man is capable of, to behave himſelf *Religiouſly* towards GOD; but this he can never do without firmly *believing* that there is a GOD; this belief being the *firſt* and *fundamental* point in *Religion*. *He that cometh to* GOD, *muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*, Heb. XI. 6. Therefore

In the *firſt* place, let no one think himſelf *excuſable* if he be not throughly *convinced*

that there is a GOD. For no man living that hath the right uſe of *Reaſon*, can be *ignorant* of this, and be held *Guiltleſs*. GOD hath ſo many ways *manifeſted* himſelf unto us, that the *blindeſt Heathen* cannot ſay, that he hath not had *means* enough of knowing that *He is*. And if a *Heathen* can have no *excuſe* for his being *ignorant* of this, who hath but at moſt one half of the *means* of Knowledg which every the moſt unlearned *Chriſtian* hath, how ſhould any *ignorant Chriſtian* be excuſed! Tho it be therefore too common a thing to hear both Men and Women among us, who both are of conſiderable *Age*, and alſo *Underſtanding*, and *wiſe* enough for the buſineſs of their worldly Callings, excuſing their *ignorance* of GOD, by their want of *Learning*; yet in truth they can have no *excuſe* at all for this *ignorance*. It is their *negligence*, and *ſloth*, and *unwillingneſs* to learn, that keeps them *ignorant*; and for theſe, there can be no *excuſe*. Can any one live in a *Chriſtian Church*, and not have *heard* enough, if he would have minded it, (tho he cannot *read*) to *convince* him That there is a GOD whom he is bound to ſerve? Nay, can any one live in the *World*, and not *ſee* enough every where to teach him this *firſt* and *fundamental Truth*? He that cannot *read* GOD's *word*, may yet (if he live in a *Chriſtian Church*), *hear* it, and

GOD

GOD himself *speaking* to him in it. And he that lives abroad in the *World*, tho he cannot *see* GOD himself, yet he may every where *see* his *Works*; and in them, all the *Being*, the *Power*, the *Wisdom*, and the *Goodness* of GOD. Nay, if he can but *eat* and *drink*, he may know there is a GOD that *feeds* him; for he knows very well, that it is not in his *own* power, nor of any other creature, to provide his *food* for him, or to enable him to receive good by his food. Yet more; No man, how *unlearned* so ever he be, can think seriously of *himself*, and consider *what* he is, or *how* he lives, but he may easily discover a GOD that made him to be *what* he is, and preserves him in *being* and *life*. How *inexcusable* then must every one be, for not *learning* that which every thing *teacheth* him; and which he cannot but *learn*, when he doth but consider, that he *himself* is *something*!

In the *next* place, Let none of us think it a needless thing, very often, and seriously to *consider* that there is a GOD. If we do not much *consider* it, it will be but a vain thing for us to *know* it. We should so lose the benefit of GOD's *manifesting* himself so fully and so variously to us. *Consideration* must make our *knowledg* useful to us. If there be a GOD, it is certain that we *depend* wholly

upon him, and muſt needs owe a *duty* to him. Yet tho we may *know* there is a GOD, if we keep it not *in mind*, and *think* but little of it, our *Knowledg* can have little influence on our *life* and *behaviour*; but we ſhall demean our ſelves as *careleſly*, and be every whit as *ſecure* and *unconcern'd* how we live, as tho we had never *heard*, or *thought* of any ſuch thing as a GOD. Yea, not to *conſider*, and have this much in our *thoughts*, ſeems to be more *inexcuſable* in us, than not to know it at all. As he who knows his LORD's Will, and doth it not, deſerves to be beaten with more ſtripes, than he that doth not his Will, merely becauſe he knows it not, *Luke XII.* 47. So he that *conſidereth* not much, that there is a GOD, when he *knows* it; ſeems more blameworthy, than he who doth not *know* it, and therefore cannot *conſider* it. Both are *faulty*, and can have nothing at all to plead *for* themſelves; but he that *knows*, and *conſiders* not, ſeems to be more faulty; and a great deal more may be pleaded *againſt* him. The one is *ignorant* of GOD, when he might *know* him; the other *ſets light* by GOD, when he knows him. The one not *knowing* GOD, knows not how much he *deſerves* his Thoughts; the other tho he *knows* him, yet carries himſelf ſo towards him, as if he thought him not *worthy* to be thought upon.

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He likes not to retain GOD *in his knowledg*, as 'tis ſaid of ſome, Rom. I. 28.

As then, if there be a GOD, 'tis altogether neceſſary that we ſhould *know* and *believe* it; that ſo we underſtand how much it concerns us not to live as we liſt, having one over us to whom we muſt be accountable, even for every *idle word*, Mat. XII. 36. So when we know this, 'tis altogether as neceſſary we ſhould much *conſider* and *think* of it, that we may *walk worthy of GOD unto all pleaſing*, Col. I. 10. and not wilfully or giddily run upon our own deſtruction, by *diſregarding* him. It will be a very terrible thing to the *ignorant* perſon at the laſt day, to meet with a GOD of whom he never *knew*; and then to reflect thus upon himſelf, *Had I been any thing but a* Fool, *I might have known this* GOD *to my eternal Comfort, whom now I find to my everlaſting Confuſion*! And it will be more terrible at that day, for the *unconſidering* perſon to find a GOD armed with *vengeance* againſt all that *contemn'd* him: And then to reflect on his own *folly*, ſaying, *What* a Mad-man *was I, who knew there was a* GOD, *and did not think him worth a few ſerious Thoughts, when by little ſerious conſideration, I might have prevented this confounding ſight, and my own eternal deſtruction now come upon me through my heedleſneſs*! As we therefore deſire that we may ne-

ver feel the *wrath* of GOD, let us now entertain often and ſerious *thoughts* of him.

To this purpoſe, *laſtly*, Let us be very conſtant in the uſe of all the *means* which GOD hath given us, to confirm and eſtabliſh us in this *belief*, and *lively ſenſe* of GOD; and take heed (as we love our Souls) how we give ear to any thing which may weaken this belief, or make us *doubt* of the being of a GOD. We have all the reaſon in the World to be very careful of this, Becauſe (as we have ſeen, If it be a *truth* that there is a GOD, nothing can be more neceſſary, either to *prevent* our *Miſery*, or to *promote* our *Happineſs*, than a firm *belief* of it; and tho it were *falſe* (as it cannot be) yet would it do a great deal of *good*, and no *hurt* at all. Let us labour then to be well grounded and ſetled in this belief; and to this end, let us well weigh, and conſider all thoſe many *reaſons*, which we have above taken notice of, to perſwade us to it. Eſpecially, let us diligently attend to GOD's *word*, and obſerve his *works*. The reaſon why many men, either ſo *weakly* believe that there is a GOD, or ſo little and *ſlightly* think of it; is, becauſe either their *Luſts*, or their worldly *Buſineſs*, or elſe *Vanities*, hold their thoughts ſo continually imploy'd about them, that they will not allow themſelves time, nor be at the pains to conſider thoſe notable

evidences

evidences which GOD hath given of himſelf. He that ſhuts his *Eyes*, and ſtops his *Ears*, when he ſhould *read* or *hear* GOD ſpeaking to him; or when he ſhould obſerve the wonderful *works* of *Creation* and *Providence*; it is not ſtrange if he never come to have a *rational* and *firm* belief of GOD. Therefore if we would (as it highly concerns us) be unmovably rooted in this Belief, we muſt obſerve theſe Rules.

1. Let us be ſure to keep our *Reaſon* and *Underſtanding*, which GOD has given us, as we are Men, conſtantly *awake*. Let the *Eye* of the Soul be kept *open*, that it may be ready to *ſee* GOD, whenſoever, and howſoever, he ſhews himſelf. What's the moſt *rational Diſcourſe* to a *ſleeping* man! He neither *hears* it, nor *conſiders* it, and therefore is he no *wiſer* for it. What's *Light* and *Beauty* to a man that always *winks*? He *ſees* them not, and ſo *knows* no more of them, than if they were not to be ſeen. This Truth, That there is a GOD, is as viſible to the *Underſtanding*, as Colours are to the *Eye*, but *neither* are viſible to one that is not *awake*. Let us conſider, that the *beſt* things muſt certainly be the *beſt worth* our *ſeeing* and *knowing*; and nothing can be *better* than GOD, who is the Fountain of all *Goodneſs*. Nothing is ſo carefully

to be regarded as *that*, without the knowledg whereof, we eternally periſh, and ſuch is GOD. Hath man *Underſtanding* and *Reaſon* for no uſe? Or is he to uſe them about every thing of *leaſt* concernment; and not about that which above all things in the World, he is moſtly *concern'd* to Underſtand? If there be a GOD, we muſt all of us be either *Happy* or *Miſerable* for ever, accordingly as we *Regard* and *Honour* him, or *Neglect* and *Diſhonour* him: And can there be any thing, the Knowledg whereof doth more concern us? And yet is it thus with too many of us, that whilſt our *Underſtanding* and *Reaſon* are very intent upon other things, and never grow *weary* of conſidering them, and inquiring after them, they are wholly *aſleep* as to GOD, and never imploy'd about him, as if to think of Him were not any part of our buſineſs. O why ſhould we be any longer ſuch *Fools*, as to ſuffer the *Buſineſs* and *Vanities* of this World, which *paſſeth away, and the luſts thereof*, or the *Pleaſures* of ſin which are but for a *moment*, ſo to bewitch us, that we can never be awake to GOD! Seeing that about *Him* we are moſt of all concern'd, that our Souls attain to the moſt rational and full ſatisfaction, let our *Reaſon* be buſied about him, above all things, that ſo we may be able both to live and die like *men*.

2. Let

2. Let us *exerciſe* our Reaſon in conſidering thoſe things, eſpecially, which are moſt *proper* and *apt* to beget in us the moſt *clear* and *lively ſenſe* of GOD. For as GOD hath appointed *proper means* and *helps* for the attaining to all thoſe ends which he would have us to purſue: So hath it pleaſed him to ordain *certain means*, by the uſe whereof we may *ſooneſt* and moſt *perfectly* come to the knowledg and belief of Himſelf. Such are his *Word* and his *Works*, both of *Creation* and *Providence*, which are therefore to be very diligently ſtudied and meditated upon. We muſt very frequently *read* and *hear* his Word; and when we read or hear it, we muſt be very *attentive* to it, and take heed how we do it in a *regardleſs* and *formal* manner, or as a *cuſtomary Task* only, which we have ſet our ſelves to do; as tho the *reading* or the *hearing* of it, were our *only* or *principal* Buſineſs. Our work is to *think* and *conſider* well of all that we read and hear, that we may be perfectly *inform'd*, and throughly *convinced*, and heartily *affected* with the matters which are therein commended, either to our *Belief* or *Practice*. In vain ſhall we either read or hear GOD's *word*, if we do not labour to *ſee* and *hear* GOD *himſelf* ſpeaking to us, and diſcovering *Himſelf* and his *Will* unto u stherein. To read in the *Bible* ſo many *Chapters* a Day,

Day, or to hear so many *Sermons* a Week, is an Employment to as little purpose as the reading or hearing any common History, if we make it not our end to come better *acquainted* with GOD, and to be instructed in our *Duty* of Honouring and Serving him. And thus is it also in our *seeing*, and *observing* and making *use* of the many and wonderful *works* of GOD: Whilst we endeavour only to serve *our selves* of them, and not to *discern* GOD in them, we improve nothing in our Knowledg of GOD by them. How many of us busie our selves daily *abroad* in the *Field*, or at *Home* in the *Garden*, and what *wonders* of GOD's *Power* and *Wisdom* and *Goodness* have we there constantly before our Eyes! and yet we profit no more in the knowledg of GOD by what we see, than the Beasts themselves. How many of us are very busie in studying and observing the courses of the *Stars*, and in searching in the secrets of *Nature*; and yet never have it once in their Thoughts to learn any thing of GOD by all his wondrous Works! If we would strengthen our belief of GOD, and make any proficiency in the knowledg of him, we must design this, and exercise our Reason in every thing to that end; and labour to *taste* and *see* how good and *gracious*, how *wise* and *powerful* GOD shews himself in every thing we meet with. There

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is not the moſt *unlearned* perſon in the World, but if he will give diligent heed to what he *hears* of GOD, though he connot *read*, and to what he *ſees* of GOD, though he cannot *ſee* GOD himſelf; he may find enough to confirm him in the belief of GOD, and inſtruct him very far in the *Nature* of GOD, even paſt all *doubting*. Eſpecially,

3. If in the next place, he by ſerious *Prayer* call upon GOD to open his Eyes that they may ſee, and his Ears that they may hear, and his Heart that it may underſtand the things which he hath made neceſſary for him to believe and know. Let us therefore in good earneſt *beg* of GOD himſelf, that he would *ſhew* and *declare* himſelf more *clearly* and *convincingly* to us in all the means of Knowledg and Underſtanding. No man can have a hearty deſire to find GOD, but he may aſſure himſelf that GOD upon his hearty requeſt will ſhew himſelf unto him. *If thou ſeek the* LORD *thy* GOD, *thou ſhalt find him; if thou ſeek him with all thy Heart, and and with all thy Soul*, Deut. IV. 29. *God looketh down from Heaven to ſee if there be any that underſtand and ſeek after* GOD, Pſal. XIV.

2. But alas! *The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not ſeek after* GOD;

GOD

GOD is not in all his thoughts Pſal. X. 4. If men had rather be without a GOD, than have one; if men be *unwilling* and *afraid* to find GOD, leſt they ſhould (as certainly they muſt) find in GOD a LORD and *Maſter*, whom they are bound to ſerve and obey; what wonder is it if GOD withdraw and hide himſelf from them that love him not? Why ſhould he not depart out of ſight, when he is but an eye-ſore to them? Why ſhould he not leave all thoſe to the *Tyranny* of their own Luſts, who deſire not to have him reign over them? What reaſon can be given, why GOD ſhould afford them any longer *eyes* to *ſee* withal, who above all things cannot endure to ſee *him*? Or why ſhould he not ſuffer *Satan* to blind their Minds, that they may never again be able to ſee that Light which they cannot love? If we would know GOD, let us ſhew by our earneſt *Prayers*, that we *long* to know him.

Let us never have an *Ear open* to any one, whatſoever he be, that calls in queſtion the *being* of GOD, or would bring us to *doubt* of it. But on the contrary, let us reſolutely ſtop our Ears, and refuſe to hearken to the *Atheiſtical* Diſcourſes of prophane and wicked Perſons, of what Rank, Note, or Eſteem ſoever they may be in the World. Let no one

one perſwade us to think it either *unreaſonable* or *unmannerly*, thus to behave our ſelves towards men of this temper. They may call us *obſtinate* and *ſullen* in refuſing to hear Reaſon, and *uncivil* and *clowniſh* in turning away from our Betters. But how eminent ſoever, either for *Learning* or *Honour* any one may be, who would entertain us with ſuch diſcourſes, as tend to draw us off from believing a GOD; it cannot be neither *Obſtinacy* nor *Incivility*, not ſo much as to take notice of what he ſaith.

It cannot be thought *unreaſonable*, or an *obſtinate Stubbornneſs*, not at all to hearken to any man's Diſcourſe, which we are well aſſured before-hand can have no *Reaſon* in it. And we are ſure before-hand, that whatever *Reaſon* may be pretended, (as none brags more of his being a Maſter of Reaſon, than the proud *Atheiſt*); yet no *Reaſon* at all can be given us, by any one for this opinion, That there is no GOD, or againſt our believing that there is one. And this is very plain, becauſe as hath been ſaid, no man can be in any degree *ſure* that there is no GOD; and the belief that there is one, is at leaſt *probable*, and certainly doth much *good* and no *hurt*. What *Reaſon* can there poſſibly be in a Diſcourſe, perſwading not to believe what can never be proved to be *falſe*; what it's very

ſafe

ſafe to believe, and the belief whereof doth the greateſt *good* imaginable? Or again, What *Reaſon* can that Diſcourſe have in it, which tends to perſwade us to believe what no man can ſhew to be true; which it is ſo *dangerous* to believe, that a man hazards his Soul by it, and the belief whereof will certainly make the wide World too *uneaſy* a place to live in? It cannot therefore be *obſtinacy* or *unreaſonableneſs*, never to hearken to any Diſcourſe of which we know all this before-hand.

Neither can it be *uncivil*, or *unmannerly*, how great or eminent ſoever the perſon be that would entertain us with ſuch Diſcourſes, to turn away our ears from him. What *incivility* can it be, to ſeem *rude* to him, who is ſo *rude* to the whole World, as in effect to call all men *Fools* but himſelf? Yea, how can one be *uncivil* to that man, who declares himſelf the common *Enemy* of Mankind, and of all *Civil Society* and *Government*? How can one be *unmannerly* to him, whoſe Diſcourſe tends to no better end, than to corrupt all good *Manners*, and to baniſh *Virtue* from among men? He that tells us there is no GOD; by telling us ſo, *abſolves* and *diſchargeth* us from all manner of *duty*, *honour*, or *civil reſpect* to himſelf as our *better*, or *ſuperior*. For if there be no GOD, who made us to differ from one another, Who

made

made *him* our *ſuperior*, or *us inferior* to *him*? GOD did not, if he muſt be believed; for he tells us there is none. And *Man* could not without our conſent, for who gave any man that Right over his Fellows? If he have got to be higher than any one elſe by Might or Cunning; nothing can hinder any one to climb, whenever he can, as he has done; or to trample him under foot, inſtead of bowing the knee to him. Whoever then tempts us to *Atheiſm*, is ſoon anſwer'd if we pleaſe. We need do no more, but *deſpiſe* him. Or if we will be at any farther trouble with him, we need but ask him two or three Queſtions, and leave him to anſwer them to himſelf when he can.

1. When he tells us there is no GOD, and would have us believe it: before we do ſo, he cannot think it unreaſonable we ſhould ask him, *How he knows it?* If he can tell us this, and will not, he is too *unkind* to be thought a friendly Counſellor: and if he cannot, we have little cauſe to be fond of ſuch a *Teacher*. Is it reaſon to believe one upon his word, that knows not that to be true which he teacheth? Is it wiſdom to follow a Guide, who confeſſeth himſelf to be blind?

2. When he perſuades us to believe there is

is no GOD, it cannot but be very fit to ask again, *Is it ſafe ſo to do?* Or, *Is it unſafe to do otherwiſe?* He cannot aſſure us, 'tis *ſafe* to believe there is no GOD, becauſe he cannot make us *know* that there is none. And he muſt needs confeſs, 'tis not *unſafe* to believe there is a GOD, becauſe it can do no *hurt*. Is it reaſonable then to leave the *ſafe* way we are already in, that we may follow him into another, wherein he cannot promiſe us any *ſafety* at all?

3. If he would have us to believe there is no GOD, 'tis not unreaſonable to ask him, *Why would he have us to believe it?* Or, *What good will it do either him or us?* If it will do neither any good, Why ſhould he perſuade us, or we be perſuaded to an unprofitable thing? There is danger in it; and what reaſon is there to do what we know 'tis dangerous to do, till we ſee what good may come of it?

4. If he ſay, 'tis fit to believe it, merely becauſe 'tis a *truth*; We muſt needs ask again, *How doth he know 'tis a truth?* But yet 'tis in vain to ask him this, becauſe 'tis impoſſible for him to tell us how he knows it, or to know it. And therefore we have yet no reaſon to believe it is a truth, becauſe he only calls

calls it so, who doth not know that it is so. But suppose it were, I hope it may be fit to ask him again, *Is he in good earnest, and would he indeed have us to belive it for a truth?* If he be not willing we should believe it, why doth he tempt us to believe it? If he would indeed have us believe it, would he not also have us behave our selves as men of that belief? If not, to what purpose are we to believe it? If he would have us behave our selves as men that believe not a GOD, then may we do what we will, and can; we may rob his *House*, take his *Money*, defile his *Wife*, and cut his *Throat*. If he deny this, let us ask him, What is it that can make it unlawful for us to do any of these things? What should restrain men from doing any thing they can for their own advantage? This is all that the *Atheist* can gain by persuading men to be of his Opinion, That he lays himself at every man's mercy to deal as he will with him; and cannot say, That man sins, that knocks him on the head for his good advice.

2. If there be a GOD, every one that is *Wise* will not only think himself highly concern'd to *believe* it, but so to *live* and *behave* himself in the world, as may be most *pleasing* and *acceptable* to GOD. To what purpose can it be tobelieve that there is a GOD? or what good can this belief do us, if it do not en-

gage us to live as men who are ſenſible that they have a GOD over them, whom they are concern'd to pleaſe in all things? Certainly if there be a GOD who made us and all things, *He muſt* needs be concern'd with *us*, and *we* with *Him*. And as we can expect no good thing but from *Him*, who is the *Author* and *Diſpoſer* of all things; ſo neither can we hope to receive any good thing from him, if we do not our endeavour to *pleaſe* Him. Why ſhould we think He will bleſs us according to our deſire, if we be not careful to ſerve and honour him according to his *Will?* That therefore we may reap the good and benefit of this ſo neceſſary a Belief, we are to conſider well, *what* it is that we believe, and what *duty* that belief muſt needs bind upon us. That which we believe, is, That there is a GOD; and to be GOD, is to be the *firſt Cauſe* and *Author*, the *Maker*, *Preſerver*, *Lord*, and *Governour* of the whole World, and all things therein; the *Fountain* of all *Power*, and *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs*; and therefore the *higheſt Power*, the *greateſt Wiſdom*, and the *chief Good*. Now if GOD be all this, then it is very eaſy for every one to ſee certain *duties* lying upon us, as we are the *creatures* of GOD, which naturally ariſe from what we believe, even from this one point, That there is a GOD.

1. GOD being the *first Cause*, *Author*, and *Maker* of all things, He is the very *Fountain* and *Original* of all *Being*, and *Life*, *Power*, *Wisdom and Goodness*. All these are in him *originally*, as in the inexhaustible *Spring* and *Fountain*; and there can be nothing at all of any of these things in the World, but what is derived from *him*; neither can any of these be any longer in the world, than it pleaseth him. All this must needs be very plain to every Understanding. If then we will live as men who are sensible that there is a GOD by whom we live, and without whom nothing can have either life or being;

We must needs, *First*, have the *highest* and most *honourable Thoughts* of GOD, the greatest *reverence* and *esteem* for him, that can possibly be in the heart of man. We are not to conceive of him, as of one whose *excellencies* and *vertues*, tho' they exceed those of any other Being whatsoever, are yet contain'd within such or such *bounds* or *limits*, or are at such a *degree*, and no *higher*; but we are to think of him, as of one who in the *Perfections* of the *Divine Nature*, is *infinitely* above all the thoughts of *Men* and *Angels*; of *incomprehensible Glory* and *Majesty*, of *boundless Power*, *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*; such as is to be always admired and adored, but never to be fully seen or understood. We are how-

ever to labour every day to *know* more and more of him, that the more we know, the more we may *admire*, and *love*, and *rejoyce*, and even be raviſh'd with thoſe *unconceivable excellencies*, which to diſcern more clearly, will be our eternal happineſs in Heaven. Our hearts therefore ſhould be always fill'd with, and our mouths ſhould ſound forth the praiſes of GOD, every one ſinging with the holy Pſalmiſt, *Bleſs the LORD, O my ſoul, and all that is within me, bleſs his holy name*, Pſal. CIII. 1. *Bleſs the LORD, O my ſoul. O LORD my GOD thou are very great, thou art clothed with honour and majeſty*, Pſal. CIV. 1. *While I live will I praiſe the LORD; I will ſing praiſe unto my GOD, while I have any being*, Pſal. CXLVI. 2. *Let every thing that hath breath, praiſe the LORD*, Pſal. CL. 6. *Be thou exalted, O GOD, above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth*, Pſal. CVIII. 5. *Bleſſed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all bleſſing and praiſe*, Neh. IX. 5.

Secondly, It muſt needs be our Duty to walk *humbly* before GOD, and to *abaſe* our ſelves in his *Preſence*, whoſe eyes are continually *open* upon us. We muſt always bear in mind, that he is our GOD and *Maker*, and we are at beſt but the *work* of his Hands, and had never been any thing, had he not been

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pleas'd to give us a being. How *wise*, how *rich*, how *great* soever we now are, or seem to the eyes of men; we have it all, even as far as our very *Being*, of GOD's free gift; and he can whenever he pleaseth, deprive us of all again. He made *all things* of *nothing*, and therefore *all things* are *nothing* in comparison of *him*. What is the *clay* in the hand of the *Potter*, who can do with it what he *will?* And how much less than that is *man* in the hand of GOD? The *Potter* can form the clay into a new *shape*, or cast it away and trample on it; but he neither gave it a *being*, nor can take away it's being from it. But GOD gave us, and all things, our very *being*; look therefore how much *nothing* is less than *all things*, so much are the *best* of men less than GOD; we being all originally *nothing*. Say then with the Psalmist. *LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledg of him? Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him? Man is like to vanity, his days are as a shadow that passeth away*, Psal. CXLIV. 3, 4. *Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man that is a worm, and the son of man which is a worm?* Job XXV. 5, 6. *All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him, less than nothing, and vanity*, Isa. XL. 17. *Verily every man at his best*

ſtate is altogether vanity, Pſal. XXXIX. 5. And when ever GOD *rebukes him, he makes his beauty to conſume away like a moth*, v. 11. *Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity*, Pſalm LXII. 9. And ſhall ſuch a thing as man be proud? Can man ſeem any thing in his own eyes, when he thinks upon GOD? Alas! what cannot he do with us, who with a word made all things of nothing? What can we do, either againſt him, or without him, without whom we cannot one moment continue in being?

2. If GOD be the *Maker* of us and of all things, then is it paſt all diſpute, that both *we*, and *all things*, are *His*; and that we cannot have the leaſt *right* to our ſelves, and therefore none to any thing elſe, but what he is pleaſed to allow us. Nothing could make him ſo *abſolute a right* in and over us, to *uſe* and *diſpoſe* us at pleaſure, as this, That he *made* us of *nothing*. We therefore and all things are *abſolutely his own*; and being ſo, 'tis his indiſputable right, to *order* and *diſpoſe* of every thing as it ſhall ſeem good to him, to place us *where* he will, give us *what* allowance he will, aſſign us what *Condition* he will, and put us to what *Uſe* and *Service* it pleaſeth him. *Know ye that the* LORD *he is* GOD,

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it is he that hath made us, and not we our ſelves; we are his people, and the ſheep of his paſture, Pſal. C. 3.

Therefore, *firſt*, It muſt needs be our Duty moſt humbly to *acknowledg* GOD's *abſolute right* in and to us, and all things, and in a due acknowledgment of the ſame, to yield up our ſelves, and all things moſt freely, and without any grudging, to be diſpoſed of by him, according to his own Will and Pleaſure. We muſt leave it wholly to GOD, to uſe his right as he pleaſeth, and to do what he will with his own; knowing aſſuredly, that whatſoever he doth with us, or any other thing, he doth but what he *may* do, and can do us no *wrong*: Yea, he always doth what's *beſt* and *fitteſt* to be done, becauſe he is of infinite *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*. Whatever therefore is come to paſs, or ſhall come to paſs in the world; whatever hath befallen, or ſhall befal us, it is our duty to *ſubmit* to it, and to ſet our hearts at *reſt* about it; remembring that GOD is always doing, what beſt becomes him to do; and permitting to be done, what is moſt proper to be done. *He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him, What doeſt thou?* Dan. IV. 35. What are we, that we ſhould concern our ſelves any farther with

GOD's Doings, whatever they be, than to admire his *Wiſdom* in them? The poſture of Soul wherein we ſhould always be, as beſt becoming us, is that of a moſt *humble* and *willing Reſignation* of our ſelves, and all our concerns unto his ordering; every one ſaying after our moſt bleſſed JESUS, *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*, Mat. XXVI. 39. and v. 42. *Thy will be done.*

Secondly, We are to account it our duty in all that we have or do, ſo to behave our ſelves, as becometh thoſe who *have* nothing of their *own*, neither *are* their *own*, but muſt own both *themſelves*, and *all* they have to be *his*, who made them. We muſt not therefore take to our ſelves any other *Liberty* in any thing, than what GOD gives us. We muſt not make ſo bold with his *right*, as to do what we have a mind to do with *our ſelves* or any thing elſe; but enquire firſt, what he gives us *leave* to do. GOD is pleaſed to allow us as much liberty in all things, as may do us *good*; and hath freely beſtow'd his good Creatures upon us, ſo far as they may be ſerviceable to *us* in our ſerving of *him*. But as we have them of his gift, ſo hath he given them upon ſuch *terms* and *conditions* as pleaſed *him*; and upon no other terms we are to account them *ours*. Together with them, he has given us *Laws* and *Rules* to be careful

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ly obſerved by us in the uſe of them. It were very abſurd for us to think any thing ſo *ours*, that we may *uſe* it to GOD's Diſhonour, or to *hurt* our ſelves or others with what we have. Our *Meat* we have for *Nouriſhment*, not for *Gluttony*; our *Drink* for *Refreſhment*, not for *Drunkenneſs*; our *Cloaths* for a *Decent* and *Warm* covering, not for *Pride*: Our *Wit*, our *Strength*, our *Wealth*, and all things, to do *good* with, but not to help or incourage us to *hurt* any one. All things we poſſeſs are our *Maſter's goods*, and we our ſelves are his *Servants*. No man ought to ſay, I may do what I will with mine *own*; for nothing is ſo our *own*, as that we are *ſole* or *abſolute Owners* of it. As GOD is to be *thank'd* for the uſe and benefit of all, ſo is he alſo to be *conſulted* and *obey'd* in the uſe of all. *For the earth is the* LORD's, *and the fulneſs thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.* Pſalm XXIV. 1.

Thirdly, it muſt needs be our duty, not to *repine* or *murmur*, not to be *fretful* and *impatient*; but to be *content* and *ſatisfied* whatever comes to paſs.

Do evil doers, and ſuch as we think deſerve worſt at the hands of GOD, flouriſh and proſper; What's that to us? GOD is but doing his pleaſure with his *own*. Have we not

not all, and more than is our due? And hath not he, whoſe own are all things, a right to diſtribute them as he pleaſeth? Hath GOD given others any thing that was ours? And is it not of his free and undeſerved Gift, that any thing is ours? *Fret not thy ſelf becauſe of evil doers, neither be thou envious againſt the workers of iniquity*, Pſal. XXXVII. 1. *Reſt in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thy ſelf becauſe of him who proſpereth in his way becauſe of the man that bringeth wicked devices to paſs*, v. 7. *But wait on the LORD, and keep his way*, v. 34. What have we to do to murmur at GOD's diſpoſing of his own?

Do we *ſuffer* evil things? Why ſhould we not, if it ſeem good unto GOD? Are we not his? And may he not uſe *his own* as he will? What ever the evils be, or by whomſoever they are brought upon us, we are to ſubmit with *patience*. No inſtrument could hurt us, if he did not permit it; and may he not permit what he will to be done to *his own*? Are we rob'd or ſpoyl'd, let us ſay, *The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, bleſſed be the name of the LORD*, Job I. 21. *It is the LORD, let him do what ſeemeth him good*, 1 Sam. III. 18. Whatever befals us, let us ſay, *Behold here I am, let him do to me as ſeemeth good unto him*, 2 Sam. XV. 26. *I was dumb, and opened not my*

my month, becauſe thou didſt it, Pſalm XXXIX. 9.

Is our preſent *Condition* ſcanty, uneaſy, unpleaſant, unſuitable to our minds? What are we, that we ſhould think to chuſe for our ſelves, *this* or *that* condition of life, which we think beſt; who are not *our own*, neither can chuſe, whether we ſhall *live* or *die*? Is not our *Condition*, whatever it be, better than we deſerve? And is it not of GOD's chuſing for us? And is it not fit he ſhould place *his own Goods* in *his own* Houſe, *where*, and *how*, he pleaſeth? Have we not all that we have right to have, when we have what it pleaſeth GOD to give us? And are we not in the condition we ſhould be in, when we are as it hath pleaſed GOD to diſpoſe of us? *Shall the clay ſay to him that faſhioneth it, what makeſt thou?* Iſa. XLV. 9. *Shall the thing formed, ſay unto him that formed it, Why haſt thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the ſame lump to make one veſſel unto honour, and another unto diſhonour?* Rom. IX. 20, 21. *Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content*, 1 Tim. VI. 8. Yea, this is our duty, *to learn, in whatſoever ſtate we are, therewith to be content*, Phil. IV. 10.

3. If there be a GOD, who made both

us and *all* the world, then is he our LORD, and the *Governour* of all the world. As he alone by reaſon of his *infinite Power*, *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* can be thought fit to *rule* the world, ſo can he not have a more *abſolute Soveraignty* over it, or *Right* to govern it, than that which is founded in *Propriety*; nor any *Propriety* more ſure and unqueſtionable, than that which ariſeth from *Creation* or his making *all things* of *nothing*. Therefore *The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all*, Pſal. CIII. 19.

It is then our duty, to be *ſubject* to his *Laws* and *Government* in all things. To *ſubmit* to his *Providence*, in ordering all the Affairs of the world; and to *approve* of all his *wiſe Diſpenſations*, whatever changes or alterations he makes in *States* or *Kingdoms*. To *obey* all his *Laws*, and apply our ſelves diligently to the *learning* of them, that we may frame our whole lives by them. It muſt needs concern us, *to be in the fear of the LORD all the day long*, Prov. XXIII. 17. *To ſtand in awe, and not ſin.* Pſal. IV. 4.

Again; If GOD, be our *Governour*, it muſt be our duty to *truſt* to his Government, and *rejoyce* therein. For how can we be *ſafer*,

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or *happier*, than to be under the Government and Protection of infinite *Power*, *Wiſdom*, *and Goodneſs*? *The* LORD *reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the Iſles be glad thereof*, Pſal. XCVII. 1. Let us *be careful for nothing*, Phil. IV. 6. Neither *take thought for the morrow*, Mat. VI. 34. *but truſt in the* LORD *and do good: ſo ſhall we dwell in the land, and verily we ſhall be fed*, Pſal. XXXVII. 3. *The* LORD *will bleſs the righteous, with favour will he compaſs him as with a ſhield*, Iſa. V. 12.

4. If there be a GOD, who is the *firſt Cauſe* of all things, he muſt needs be the *Fountain* of all *Bleſſedneſs*, and the *chief good*; no good thing can be expected but from him alone, and all our *happineſs* muſt conſiſt in his *favour* and *love*. And therefore,

The whole *deſire* of our Souls ſhould be to continue in his *favour*, and to have his *love*. Nothing ſhould be ſo much our ſtudy and endeavour, even all the days of our life, as how in all things to *pleaſe* him, and to do ſuch things only as we know to be moſt *acceptable* to him.

Next, It muſt certainly be our duty to *love*

love GOD above all things; for 'tis moſt unnatural not to love that *beſt*, which is *beſt* in it ſelf, and doth us *moſt good*. It is therefore our duty to love nothing more than GOD, nothing *ſo much* as GOD; nothing but in Subordination, or in *Relation* to him. *That is*, nothing but what GOD *allows* us to love, and ſo as for the love of GOD, we can any time be willing to part with it; nothing but what may *help* us the better to love GOD, and nothing that *abates* our love to GOD. We are to love GOD in all the things we love, becauſe nothing hath any *lovelineſs*, but what is from GOD.

And becauſe GOD is the *chief good*, we are to be *content* with GOD, whatever elſe we want; and whatever elſe we have, never to be ſatisfied with it, or to make account that we have any thing at all, whilſt we can find no good ground to hope that GOD is *our* GOD, and that we are in his *favour*.

And *Finally*, Seeing GOD is the *Author* of all *Goodneſs*, we are on all occaſions moſt humbly to addreſs our ſelves to him in *Prayer*, for a ſupply of all our wants of what ſort ſoever; and to return him our daily *Praiſe*

Praiſe and *Thanks* for every good thing we enjoy.

He that doth not thus behave himſelf towards GOD, is no better for believing that there is a GOD; neither, whatever he may pretend, ſhall he eaſily perſuade any conſidering man, that he believes any ſuch thing.

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